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World turning blind eye to catastrophe

John Vidal

IRRESPONSIBLE and short-sighted governments are pushing the world rapidly towards environmental and economic disaster by spending billions on the destruction of land, oceans and the atmosphere, according to three reports published this week.

In language that cuts through the "greenwash" of governments and corporations, the United Nations, a Washington think-tank and British government advisers independently claim that governments are not addressing the social and economic problems posed by deteriorating water, land and air resources.

The triple assault began in Washington where the Worldwatch Institute said Western governments were spending up to $500 billion a year subsidising the destruction of oceans, atmosphere and land.

More than $100 billion a year is spent subsidising power stations which worsen global warming, $300 billion encouraging destructive farming and overgrazing and $50 billion encouraging overfishing, said Christopher Flavin, joint author of a chapter in State Of The World, the institute's annual assessment of the global environment. Most subsidies, he said, go to the rich.

In a separate report from its own advisers, the British government was criticised for spending up to £20 billion ($32 billion) of taxpayers' money on environmentally damaging industry, energy and agriculture grants.

The Panel On Sustainable Development, set up by John Major five years ago and chaired by the former diplomat Sir Crispin Tickell, reported that nothing less than "a different philosophy in local and national government" will be able to avoid potentially crippling social and economic decline.

The panel said government handouts which did not take into account the cost to the environment totalled £7.3 billion a year, but almost tripled if hidden subsidies — such as tax exemptions and government procurements — were included. The panel called for a government task force to reconsider its subsidies and for the development of renewable energy.

In Nairobi, the UN Environment Agency warned that almost 3 billion people would be severely short of water within 50 years. Land covering 1.23 billion acres — an area more than 12 times larger than Britain — already had moderate to severe soil erosion in Africa, most oceans were being overfished and more than three-quarters of the world's species were declining or facing extinction because governments were not addressing the global environment crisis which could put the lives of billions of people in jeopardy.

The agency's director, Elizabeth Dowdeswell, told diplomats from 100 countries that politicians were not grasping the seriousness of the situation. The world could not afford to burn fossil fuels if, as expected, population doubled within 50 years.

Alternative energy sources needed to be vigorously pursued to prevent economic growth exacerbating air pollution and hastening climate change, she said. The world was consuming its natural resources faster than they could be renewed, but politicians "lacked a necessary sense of urgency" and were not honouring pledges made at the 1993 Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit, when more than 150 nations agreed to strengthen environmental protection.

The Worldwatch Institute's report supported her claims: "Too many governments are pursuing economic growth at any price, ignoring the fact that the damage to the atmosphere and the oceans could severely disrupt the world's economies."

An elderly Chechen urges fellow villagers in Vedeno to vote in the elections on Monday

War-battered nation rushes to polls

David Hearst in Grozny

THE corridor of School Number One, a bombed-out shell of a building, was filled with more than 100 people who had been waiting for hours. It was not bread or petrol they were queueing for, but a chance to vote.

Every 10 minutes the door at the end of the blacked-out corridor opened to let a few more in. Beyond lay a room palpitating with excitement. Old women hobbled on the arms of their children. They pressed around the desks to show their Soviet passports, the old proof of identity they needed to register their name.

They lined up with equal passion to have their right hand sprayed with a liquid that shows up under an infra-red light, a safeguard against multiple voting.

"We are going to run out of ballot papers if this keeps up. It's the number of refugees who are entitled to vote — there are too many of them," said Pietimat Barachanova, a teacher who had volunteered to run the polling station. The same euphoria was repeated thoughout Chechenia on Monday. Half way through the day, the central election commission said it would extend the polling by two hours.

After all the bombs and rockets, the rigged elections, the Moscow-backed stooge regimes that had been imposed on this hardy people, this was their chance to choose their own leader. They grasped it in both hands, as if Monday really was the first day of independence. Even the few ethnic Russians left in Chechenia were gripped by election fever.

The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the international body monitoring the elections, reported that it had received no threats to its observers, who monitored polling in more than half the republic's stations.

However, it is hard to see how the euphoria of choosing an elected leader will survive the reality of life in a country one half of which is destroyed.

Aslan Maskhadov, who forced Russian troops out of Chechnia with a combination of warfare and diplomacy, appeared certain of a clear victory on Tuesday in the presidential polls. The likely result will lend weight to the mainly Muslim region's demands for secession from Russia.

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF75	Netherlands	G 4.75
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 450	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3.30

Police killers of Steve Biko seek amnesty

Alexandra Zavis in Johannesburg

TESTING the limits of forgiveness in a country torn by its past, five former South African policemen are seeking amnesty for killing Steven Biko, whose death 20 years ago made him a symbol of apartheid brutality.

Christelle Terreblanche, a spokeswoman for the Truth Commission investigating political crimes committed by security forces and opposition guerrilla groups under apartheid, earlier said that it was expecting applications for amnesty relating to Biko's death.

A source close to the five former policemen, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the amnesty applications would assert that Biko was "handled robustly", but that at no time had there been any intention to kill him.

Biko, a young and charismatic leader, developed a wide following among blacks during the early 1970s, but was branded a terrorist by the white government. He was arrested in September 1977 and died of head injuries apparently caused by a savage beating in his cell.

"He was very broad-minded and working to unify all the black organisations," said Donald Woods, a former newspaper editor whose friendship with Biko was featured in director Richard Attenborough's film Cry Freedom. "It was a great tragedy that he was killed, but his death had enormous impact overseas."

Biko was arrested and apparently beaten in Port Elizabeth. He was driven, without medical attention, nearly 1,100km to the Pretoria prison where he died on September 12, 1977, aged 30.

Mr Woods, who accompanied his widow to the mortuary to identify his body, said it was covered with cuts and bruises.

No one was convicted of Biko's death, although an inquest concluded he had probably received fatal head injuries while being questioned by police. At the time, police denied beating him.

The then justice minister, Jimmy Kruger, told a meeting of the governing National Party that "Biko's death leaves me cold. He died after a hunger strike."

The Port Elizabeth Herald, which first reported that the five former policemen would seek amnesty, identified them as Colonel Harold Snyman, who led the team that interrogated Biko; Lt Col Gideon Nieuwoudt, who was a detective sergeant at the time; Ruben Marx, then a warrant officer; Daantjie Siebert, a captain; and Johan Beneke, a warrant officer. — *AP*

Rescued heroes that the world can ill afford

THE SUCCESSFUL rescues of solo yacht racers Thierry Dubois and Tony Bullimore from the Southern Ocean, thanks to the enormous efforts of the Australian armed services, justifiably turned the spotlight on the personnel involved for their courage and professionalism (Alive — after four days in a watery tomb, January 19). However, in the wake of such exhilarating success, to question the value for money of mounting such operations is seen as somehow perverse. How, we are asked to consider, can a cost value be placed on human life?

While the Australian military is yet to release details of the costs for rescuing Dubois and Bullimore, we can estimate from previous rescues that the cost of saving one Vendee Globe yacht racer runs into millions of dollars. The cost of inoculating a child in the developing world against preventable diseases is about $1.

Without saying anything about whether either of these costs is acceptable, we can see that the value the Australian government places on the lives of two self-indulgent adventurers is obviously greater than the value it places on the lives of approximately 1 million innocent children.

I hope Dubois, Bullimore and their colleagues enjoy the preparation for their next solo yacht expedition. If they ever find that their chosen hobby fails to deliver the personal challenges they seek, may I suggest they try some volunteer work for an international development agency. In this capacity they might still travel the globe and still test their personal limits — without using up millions of dollars in the process.
Chris Killick-Moran,
Scullin, ACT, Australia

WHAT is heroic about getting lost at sea and having thousands of someone else's dollars spent finding and rescuing you? I am glad they are alive. But something sticks in my craw.

A group of rich yachtsmen decide their lives would be better if they were to sail solo around the world. Good on them. Everyone needs a challenge. For some, finding food is the challenge because they don't have any choice. So for the boaters, it should be "you pays your money and you takes your chances". Getting lost is part of the risk of what they signed on for, and certainly is the challenge of a solo crossing. Thus it stands to reason that you should pay for the service of being rescued, hence your survival.

Others aren't so fortunate as to have a choice. How is it countenanced — as your editorial noted, but only in the last sentence — that it is easier to be found upside down in the middle of the ocean than hungry on the streets of the inner cities? Surely something is out of balance here.
Philip Adams,
Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada

YOUR Boys' Own editorial on Tony Bullimore did not mention that Australian naval forces risked their lives in dire conditions to reach the stricken yachtsmen. Australian taxpayers are also footing the bill for the rescue while Mr Bullimore negotiates fees for television chat show appearances.

Australia has a proud history of answering distress calls. But the Vendee Globe race sailors were way too far south. Nations with responsibility for rescues in large areas of ocean could easily agree on new conventions for sea rescues. If there were potential penalties, organisers of round-the-world yacht races would be more prudent and our heroes less foolhardy.
Christopher Tolhurst,
Yamba, NSW, Australia

That's a bit rich, Mr Major

DURING his visit to India, John Major's appeal for increased liberalisation of trade with the UK to improve our country's economy needs to be met with considerable scepticism. Doesn't he know that the terms of trade between unequal partners is always in favour of the rich? Also, that such unequal trade between the West and the newly independent countries was designed to obtain the latter's natural resources and to use their cheap labour? This has been facilitated by co-opting the Westernised neo-élite of these countries by various subtle means and now blatantly through the promotion of corrupt practices as revealed by pay-off scandals and the flight of capital to Western tax havens.

Whatever economic gains that accrue to the country have invariably resulted in the polarisation of its society where the rich get richer and the poor poorer, which has resulted in 39 per cent of our population still being below the poverty line half a century after independence.

No amount of increase in wealth of a country in this form of exploitative "development" can result in a trickle-down effect, for devoid of morals and ethics, wealth only trickles up. Even in a wealthy country like the UK there is a polarisation of society, with "cuts" in the social sector resulting in increasing social tension, and beggars re-emerging on the streets.

Mr Major should reflect on what is happening in his own country before he preaches the philosophy of greed to ours.
(Dr) N H Antia,
Mumbai, India

Israel wipes out the past

AFTER Israel has confiscated the land of its citizens of Palestinian origin who reside in Galilee and herded them all into blocks of flats (Hatred disfigures Promised Land, December 29), the villages where they now live will undoubtedly be obliterated with dynamite and bulldozers. Not only will there be no Palestinians there, but every trace of their former presence in the land will have been erased. Then, new official maps will be issued showing no Palestinian villages in Galilee.

This is the standard Zionist procedure: villages, hundreds of them, have been scraped off the face of the earth in this fashion all over Palestine. In a few cases some traces have survived. Ayn Hawd, which lies south of Haifa, was subjected to regular ethnic cleansing, but the village was so picturesque that it was not destroyed. It was renamed Ein Hod and converted into an artists' colony accessible to Jews only.

In the case of Amwas, the biblical Emmaus, west of Jerusalem, the people were expelled and the village destroyed, as usual. But tourists and pilgrims wanted to know where Emmaus was, so the Israeli authorities took the unusual step of erecting a plaque at the former site stating (in Hebrew and English only) that the village of Emmaus had stood there 2,000 years earlier. The Palestinian village of Amwas, however — as far as can be learned from official Israeli historiography at any rate — never existed.
Bruce Inksetter,
Rapide-Danseur, Quebec, Canada

Let Britons speak on EU

IT IS SAD to see Baroness Williams, one of the great political thinkers of recent years, writing such a disappointing letter about Britain's membership of the European Union (January 19). Too many UK politicians seem to treat such a huge step as no more than a change in local government boundaries.

The last time there was a successful European Union — the one run by the Romans — Britain had no significant influence inside or outside it. The sheer weight of advantage to the central member countries of the current EU means the same situation will inevitably recur. Acceptance is part of the price of Britain's membership.

The real issue for Britons 2,000 years ago was the same as it is today — whether the economic benefits of belonging to a European empire are worth the loss of independence and cultural identity involved. The problem all those years ago was resolved by the Romans dumping Britain from their empire.

Unless the average Briton grows to understand and accept more deeply what is involved in EU membership, the outcome may be the same again. Nor does it help to describe Britain as historically a part of Europe, when for centuries so much blood, energy and resources were dedicated to ensuring the opposite was the case.

It would be a positive and serious step forward if a proper referendum were held on Europe. Ancient Britons had no say in their incorporation into the Roman Empire, and it would be nice to know politicians had learned something after all these years.
D J Kelly,
Paddington, NSW, Australia

Pet subject for political parties

YOUR brief news item ("Labour has committed itself to a full review of quarantine, etc", January 19) sidesteps the real issue, which is not simply one of holidaymakers travelling abroad with their pets.

It is, in fact, one of workers and ex-residents needing to return to Britain, without abandoning their animals to the quarantine-kennel owners who have been enjoying a lucrative, unregulated trade of more than £15 million a year. No wonder they do not wish to see the present system dismantled and are still pressing for a period (one month) in kennels, despite the proven efficiency of the alternative safeguards against rabies (vaccinations, identification, etc).

Thank goodness that the prospect of how overseas residents will cast their vote is now influencing the political parties rather more than the established lobbies.
S Vergker,
Castelnau de Montmiral, France

Briefly

I WAS GLAD to see some prominence given to the Temagami situation in Northern Ontario (Wail of the lonesome pine, January 19), but I should point out that the Harris provincial government calls itself Progressive Conservative (an oxymoron, if there ever was one), not Liberal. The federal government is Liberal, and, despite its many faults, cannot compare with our provincial government for its slash-and-burn approach to the supposed problem of eliminating the deficit.
John M Miller,
McMaster University,
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

YOUR article on the growing problem of deprivation in Britain (2m children malnourished, January 19) is further confirmation of the appalling legacy of so-called free market economics. But no doubt the present government will see electoral advantage in the spread of malnutrition among the poor. Not only does it primarily affect traditional Labour voters, it will also ensure that the mental and physical retardation it causes at an early age will stunt the aspirations of the young for a better, fairer, and more just Britain at the turn of the new millennium.
(Dr) Steve Jordan,
Montreal, Canada

NICHOLAS LEZARD'S denunciation of Krishnamurti (January 12) suggests that he has not read a single page of his teachings. How can one condemn as a "fraudster" a man who claimed no authority and who earned the respect of such eminent thinkers as Aldous Huxley, Kahlil Gibran, Rupert Sheldrake and David Bohm?
Martin Hawes,
Cygnet, Tasmania, Australia

DOUBTLESS a number of dateline hoppers will be perched all over the Pacific on December 31, 1999 (Millenium sparks race to beat the clock, January 19), fondly imagining that they will be first into the next century. How unfortunate that they will be there 12 months too soon.

There certainly will be an "end-of-millennium psychosis": it's the overpowering rage felt by those of us unable to convince such cretins of the fact that a millennium is completed at the end, not the beginning, of its thousandth year.
Susan Tonkin,
Curtih, ACT, Canada

I WONDER if any of your readers shared my feeling of disappointment when they realised the words "Five minutes later, Albert having brought down Milosevic . . ." (January 19) were part of a sports report, not a stop press item from Belgrade.
Matthew North,
Bad Abbach, Germany

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Algeria in the grip of infernal terror

Lara Marlowe

A TERRIBLE machine haunts the imagination of Algerians since a survivor of one of last month's village massacres recounted how Islamic fundamentalist guerrillas arrived in a pick-up truck with a homemade guillotine in the back.

Gunmen rounded up the villagers, who were forced to watch as one by one their neighbours were prepared for execution. Their hands and feet were trussed up and newspaper was stuffed in their mouths. Then they were hoisted on to the truck for decapitation.

Since the holy month of Ramadan began on January 10, guerrillas fighting to overthrow President Liamine Zeroual's regime have stepped up their bombings and massacres. Since the beginning of the year at least 250 people have been killed in Algiers and the fertile Mitidja plain around the capital.

At the village of Sidi Abdelaziz, men armed with axes and swords stormed a mosque at prayer time and hacked to death 49 worshippers.

In Belcourt, the working-class neighbourhood where the writer Albert Camus grew up, a car bomb exploded in the Boulevard Belouizdad after the evening *iftar*, the meal that breaks the dawn-to-dusk fast.

With its pastry shops, sidewalk cigarette vendors, cafés and cinema, the boulevard was a favourite venue for crowds during the long Ramadan evenings — until 42 people were cut down in the car bomb explosion. They had not obeyed the tracts of the Armed Islamic Group ordering women to wear the hijab (Islamic covering) and men to stop smoking cigarettes.

The Belcourt bomb particularly shocked Algerians. "They only attack us — the poor people in poor neighbourhoods," *Hanane*, an Algiers secretary, said. "I pray more often now, because I am afraid of dying."

On Tuesday last week the bombers struck twice. The first explosion, apparently a sophisticated remote-controlled device, hit a bus from the military hospital at Ain Naadja as it ferried workers home. Sixteen were killed. A few hours later another bomb killed a taxi driver in a parking lot next to the Martyrs' Monument, the giant white stone memorial to the dead of the 1954-62 war of liberation against France which dominates the Algiers skyline.

The following day three more bombs went off in Blida and Boufarik, killing 10 more people. On Thursday last week the mayor of the Algiers slum of Bachdjarah was shot dead. It is so dangerous to be related to anyone in government that the mayor's family asked that his name not be published.

Another 30 people had their throats slashed, 26 in the village of Benramdane, south of Algiers, and four members of a policeman's family in a slum called Baraki. Last week closed with the massacre of 15 more civilians — including 10 women and two children — at a farm to the south of the capital.

"The war will continue and will be intensified during the month of Ramadan," Antar Zouabri, the leader of the Armed Islamic Group, wrote in a tract distributed in mosques last week. "We have the means and the men to punish those who are not on our side. With the exception of those who are with me, all others are infidels who deserve to die."

The attacks reported last week took place in Algiers and its surroundings. No one knows how many died elsewhere, since vast areas of the country are under a news blackout. Special permission is now required to travel within Algeria. Passports must be shown and immigration cards filled out for domestic flights. In the countryside the guerrillas ambush trains and buses. At road blocks they slaughter travellers.

As the bloodbath continued, Algerian newspapers and politicians criticised the government for its silence. Hocine Ait-Ahmed, exiled leader of the Front of Socialist Forces party, pleaded for United States mediation to end the conflict. But the government rejects suggestions that it negotiate.

President Zeroual finally spoke, promising the "extermination" of the fundamentalists and blaming "foreign forces" for a "plot" against his country.

A recent report published by the Rand Corporation, a think-tank in California, constitutes the sort of "plot" to which Mr Zeroual referred. The report had been ordered by the US army. It concluded that, one way or another, the fundamentalists would come to power in Algeria.— *The Observer*

Metal frames from old school desks are used to deter car bombers in Algiers

Comment, page 12
[illegible]

Albania leader wins powers to end riots

Joanna Robertson in Tirana

PRESIDENT Sali Berisha assumed emergency powers last weekend as northern Albania stood poised to join in a spreading wave of anti-government protests over the collapse of pyramid investment schemes.

An emergency session of parliament gave him power to use the military to guard government buildings and keep roads clear. The army will also join the police to control unrest.

The measures, designed to end two weeks of protests, were agreed after more than 20,000 demonstrators fought their way through riot police to storm into the main square in the capital Tirana, and then tried to storm the parliament.

The government announced earlier that it would compensate the victims of two schemes. It promised to begin payments on February 5, using $301 million in cash assets seized from the two schemes. The sum is a sizeable increase on previous government figures and is equal to 15 per cent of Albania's GDP.

The IMF has already made it clear that the government is in no position to pay compensation from its own funds.

The north joined the demonstrations this week, led by the city of Shkoder, where more than 40,000 investors have lost out in one pyramid scheme.

Trouble was reported in 13 other centres — including the southern port of Vlore, and the towns of Patos, Korce and Lushnje — as the opposition capitalised on popular anger at the schemes, in which many [illegible] savings. Demonstrators set fire to town halls, government buildings, police stations and offices of Mr Berisha's rightwing Democratic Party.

The prime minister, Aleksander Meksi, accused the Socialist Party — the former communists — of organising the demonstrations in an effort to regain power, a claim that seemed well founded. The Socialist Party said it was preparing a statement calling for the resignation of the Meksi government and the installation of an interim government of technocrats pending a general election.

Ten of the high-interest pyramid schemes operated in Albania. Protests began to spread last month when two of the schemes were declared bankrupt.

In pyramid schemes, as with a chain letter, mathematics dictates that the number of new members required to service future recruits will eventually exceed the national population. At this point the scheme will collapse.

The protests are not only an expression of anger at the government's failure to regulate the schemes but also a reflection of the suspicion that the ruling party is involved in some of them.

Heat on in Lima siege

THE Peruvian government is flaunting a harder stance towards the Marxist rebels holding more than 70 hostages inside Lima's Japanese diplomatic compound, sending helicopters circling over the building and surrounding it with armoured cars and élite troops, *writes Jane Díaz-Limaco in Lima.*

Last week the police tightened their cordon around the residence by driving armoured cars into the compound. They were accompanied by élite troops carrying automatic rifles. Other troops entered the area in formation — some also sporting bullet-proof vests. Snipers with infrared sights trained their weapons on the windows of the residence. Other troops took up positions as part of a practice manoeuvre.

The troops' arrival is a sign that the hawks in the government and military are gaining ground in the handling the crisis that began on December 17 when rebels of the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement attacked the Japanese embassy.

President Alberto Fujimori — known for his tough treatment of subversive groups — has hardened his stance on talks with the rebels.

Mobutu's army enters the fray

Chris McGreal in Kigali

ZAIRE'S ragged army has claimed the first victory of its long awaited counter-offensive against Rwandan-backed rebels, saying it has taken a town it has never admitted to losing in the first place.

Within a few days of launching its "total and devastating" attack last week against the *guerrilla Alliance* of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire, the government claims to have seized Walikale.

If true, it is a remarkable reversal of fortune for an army that crumbled in the face of the rebel onslaught in eastern Zaire in October. More likely the battle for the town, 130km west of rebel headquarters in Goma, has only begun.

The Zairean army is keen to revise its image as a force unable to do much but loot, rape and flee. The airport at Kisangani — the northern base for the government's strike — is piled high with weapons and awash with soldiers in their first new uniforms in years. Newly leased attack helicopters and jets sit on the runway.

Zairean radio has conjured up unswerving international support for the counter-attack. Top of the list is a promise of assistance from Libya, including air strikes by Colonel Muammar Gadafy's pilots.

But most faith is placed in white mercenaries. Their Belgian leader claims to have about 300 men. The single largest contingent is Serb, with some French, American and British hired guns thrown in. The body of a white man killed in action was *delivered to* Kisangani last weekend.

But the mercenaries are unlikely to make a difference on their own. Soldiers from the much vaunted South African firm Executive Outcomes strengthened government forces in Angola and Sierra Leone against rebel armies, but in both cases they were backing a reasonably well organised military.

In Zaire the "white legion" is fighting alongside an army more noted for inspiring terror in the general population than in the enemy. And the troops include ageing gendarmes from Katanga's abortive secessionist war 30 years ago, who do not even scare the civilians.

The obstacles that slowed the rebel advance toward Kisangani after its initial gains are also likely to hamper the government offensive. Soldiers and supplies have to be moved to a front 320km or more from the city on decrepit roads — where they exist at all — along which lorries move at snail's pace. Supply lines will be long and vulnerable to attack.

Supplying Kisangani is a laborious exercise. Everything that comes from the Zairean capital, Kinshasa, must do so by air or by a three-week haul up the river. Even with the helicopters, the bulk of troops will have to be moved east by road. Given that all the region's functioning airports are in rebel hands, government forces can only fly as far east as Kisangani.

If the Zairean army proves successful in driving back the rebels, it will probably face Rwandan soldiers intent on preventing it getting near the border.

Perhaps as crucial as anything in deciding the outcome will be the fate of Mobutu Sese Seko, who has spent most of the past few months in France with cancer. If he succumbs, the war for eastern Zaire may prove not nearly as important to the army as the battle to succeed Africa's longest-serving autocrat.

● The Rwandan army has killed dozens of peasants while hunting down Hutu extremists responsible for a new wave of killings since the return of refugees from Zaire.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
February 2 1997

The Week

THE US attorney-general, Janet Reno, has sharply criticised Saudi Arabia for failing to hand over *"very important information"* relating to the terrorist bombing at Dhahran in June, when 19 US airmen were killed.

WITNESSES said that Burundian troops led the slaughter of 400 civilians in the country's northwestern province of Muramvya, a claim subsequently denied by the Tutsi-dominated army.

THE Afghan Taliban militia has inflicted major defeats on former government forces and their allies north of Kabul, recapturing positions the Islamic militia had initially taken after capturing the Afghan capital in September.

A CYCLONE that tore through the African island of Madagascar has left 100 people missing, 30,000 homeless and at least six dead.

AFTER 15 years of legal battles, France's supreme court ruled that 86-year-old Maurice Papon should be tried for crimes against humanity relating to the deportation of Jews. And Paris is to launch a significant initiative to trace assets stolen from Jews during the German occupation, including about 2,000 works of art.

Swedish trail of gold, page 13
Swiss Holocaust fund, page 16

LEADERS of an army mutiny in the Central African Republic signed an accord formally ending their three-month uprising.

PRESIDENT Boris Yeltsin cancelled plans to visit the Netherlands on doctors' orders, deepening concern about his health and raising new doubts about his ability to rule Russia.

AT LEAST 14 people were killed and mutilated when their village was attacked in factional fighting, South African police in the Eastern Cape province said.

A PARIS court cleared Brigitte Bardot of inciting racial hatred in comments she made in a newspaper article last year against immigration and traditional Muslim animal slaughtering practices. The complaint was brought by anti-racist groups.

A CULTURAL earthquake has rocked the notoriously change-resistant Austrian capital with the announcement that the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra *is finally to admit women* members.

COLONEL Tom Parker, the former carnival manager who guided Elvis Presley to fame, died of complications after a stroke. *He* was 87.

Serbian party boss confirms poll fraud

Julian Borger in Nis

AN OFFICIAL of Serbia's ruling Socialist Party has broken ranks and accused President Slobodan Milosevic's closest aides of ordering the rigging of November's local and federal elections.

The accusation is extremely damaging to the president, who has been hit by nine weeks of street protests and international condemnation since the opposition's victories in 14 cities were arbitrarily overturned.

In the interview with the Nedeljni Telegraf weekly newspaper, Branko Todorovic — who was a Socialist Party (SPS) boss in the eastern city of Nis — provided a vivid account of ballot-stuffing in the municipal poll. He also cast doubt on the legitimacy of the SPS victory in the parallel federal elections, which had not *been questioned by the opposition.*

Most damaging of all, and a clear sign that the party's cohesion is under pressure, Mr Todorovic repeatedly stressed that the municipal administration in Nis rigged the vote on direct orders from two of President Milosevic's most loyal party functionaries.

"The party betrayed its people," Mr Todorovic said. "Please stress that the people in Nis were only the executors and all the orders came from Belgrade. Of course, the people who obeyed blindly will have to answer for that but, if it had not been for [Nikola] Sainovic and [Gorica] Gajevic, everything would have been regular."

Mr Sainovic was recently described by a government figure as "the direct line of communication from Milosevic to the party". Mr Todorovic claimed that Mr Sainovic phoned on the day of the poll and "just kept repeating that Nis must not fall into the hands of the opposition".

Mr Todorovic, a Nis businessman and its deputy mayor, has resigned from the party and kept a low profile since the interview, but his staff in the city confirmed that the newspaper had accurately reported his remarks.

In his account of the elections, Mr Todorovic claimed that party members in Nis were given "between 15,000 and 20,000 fake ballots" to ensure a Socialist victory. On polling day, November 17, the false voting slips were stuffed into the ballot boxes out of sight of opposition observers.

Asked whether the same tricks had been used in the federal elections on November 3, Mr Todorovic said: "Yes, then as well . . . they stuffed the ballots, only it wasn't discovered. It was more crowded, with a bigger number of parties, so it was easier for them."

Last week the Nis election commission reinstated the Zajedno victory and the decision was upheld by the municipal court. On Monday Zajedno took the reins of government in the city at the inaugural session of its regional assembly.

Meanwhile a Belgrade municipal court has upheld a decision rejecting an election victory by Serbia's opposition in the capital, an official said. The first district court dismissed an appeal by the city's electoral commission demanding the recognition of the opposition victory, the commission chief, Radomir Lazarevic said.

● Mr Milosevic, under increasing pressure from protesters, appears to be looking to Greece for a possible way out, according to the Greek newspaper Eleftherotypia. It says that he has drawn up contingency plans, possibly in cahoots with authorities in Athens, to move to the Greek capital, where he can be sure that exile will be sweet.



A freelance photographer, Milan Melka, is hit by a car during continuing street demonstrations in Belgrade last weekend. He was taken to hospital PHOTOGRAPH: OGNJEN RADOSEVIC

Accord fails to lay Nazi ghosts to rest

Ian Traynor in Litomerice

"I'M NOT a politician," said Danila. "I don't know if the expulsions were right *or wrong.* But it's hard to make peace with your neighbour when six years earlier he was driving you away with a stick."

As the German chancellor, Helmut Kohl, went to Prague last week to bind history's wounds, Danila, aged 63, sat in the north Bohemian town of Litomerice and recalled her wretched childhood in the second world war.

In 1938, when she was five, the Nazis rolled into Czechoslovakia and annexed the German-populated areas known as the Sudetenland. Her family fled to Prague; the Germans arrived in the capital six months later to partition the country.

Six years on, with the Nazis defeated, she returned home to find the area's ethnic Germans being brutally kicked out. "The Germans forced us out of the Sudetenland. *And then we forced them out.* Maybe we were both wrong," she sighed.

The rancour and bitterness wrought by these events have poisoned relations between the two central European neighbours since 1946 and, until last week, had defied a settlement.

On his first visit to Prague since the Czech Republic was born four years ago, Mr Kohl signed a joint declaration with the Czech prime minister, Vaclav Klaus, that is supposed to bury the hatchet between the two countries and anticipate a bright new Europe.

The signing ceremony in the Liechtenstein Palace was seen as historic. The Germans apologised for the Nazi occupation; and the Czechs regretted the post-war deportation of 3 million Germans, many of whom *were killed. The document took al*most two years to draft, with the two sides arguing over every comma. But the pomp and ceremony failed to dispel the tension between Czechs and Germans.

"We want to ask for forgiveness and we want to forgive," said Mr Kohl. That statement, which seemed to equate the Nazi seizure of Czechoslovakia with the post-war expulsions, has infuriated many Czechs.

"What have the Czechs got to apologise for," raged Jiri Sekyra in Litomerice. "I'm against that . . . Sure, the Germans lived here for centuries. But they started the war. They lost it. And they had to deal with the consequences."

Republicans fly the flag

AUSTRALIA'S National Day, which commemorates the arrival of the convict fleet in 1788, was overshadowed on Monday by a renewed push to break the constitutional ties with Britain and a looming Aboriginal land-rights crisis, *writes Christopher Zinn in Sydney.*

The republican movement stepped up its campaign to ensure that an Australian head of state, not the British monarch, will open the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games.

And Ausflag, a well-connected group pressing for a change of flag, unveiled a design featuring the Southern Cross but omitting the Union Jack.

Even the Australian of the Year, the Nobel medicine prizewinner Professor Peter Doherty, supported republican ideals.

However, a growing dispute with Aborigines about their title to land, provoked by a high court ruling in December, threatens to dominate and destabilise the political scene this year far more than arguments about republicanism.

Ironically, it was the representative of the Queen, Governor-General Sir William Deane, and not the prime minister, John Howard, who spoke of reconciliation between whites and blacks in his Australia Day address.

Police inquiry into Likud scandal

Jessica Berry in Jerusalem

ISRAELI police launched an inquiry last week into allegations of high-level political corruption which — if proved — could topple Binyamin Netanyahu's government.

The *investigation was provoked* by allegations on Israel's state-owned Channel One television that Mr Netanyahu's appointment last month of Roni Bar-On as attorney-general was part of a political deal to help the leader of a party in the government coalition in his corruption trial. Mr Bar-On resigned *12* hours into the new job after he was accused of being unfit for the post, following reports that he enjoyed gambling.

The television station alleged that he was appointed after he promised to arrange a plea-bargain for Aryeh Deri, *whose 10-member Shas party* plays a key role in Mr Netanyahu's Likud-led coalition.

The channel added that Mr Deri had promised to support Mr Netanyahu on the partial withdrawal of troops from Hebron if Mr Bar-On was appointed. It was feared that the agreement would fail without the support of the two Shas ministers.

"The state prosecutor instructed the police to investigate allegations raised in the report on Channel One," a justice ministry spokeswoman said.

The police commissioner, Assaf *Hefetz,* was expected to appoint an investigative team which could summon Mr Netanyahu for questioning, although Channel One admitted that Mr Netanyahu himself was not involved, but rather someone working with him.

One-sided view, page 17

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
February 2 1997

Queen loses her head in Hong Kong

Andrew Higgins in Hong Kong

THE Queen last weekend had her head chopped off in Hong Kong — and throngs of people across Britain's last big colony queued for hours to share a moment offering joy, sadness and, far more important for most, a chance to make money.

"She is history," sniffed Davis Lau, a celebrant of the new order. "Hong Kong is going back to China so we have to get rid of her head."

Along with thousands of others, Mr Lau spent the day in a huge queue inching towards the Central Post Office, the venue for an unprecedented act of *lèse-majesté.*

For the first time since British gunboats claimed this "barren rock" for Queen Victoria and drug traffickers in 1841, Hong Kong issued stamps shorn of the monarch's image and crown.

Across this relic of empire now just months from Chinese rule, post office staff had to give up their day off to meet a rush of philatelists, speculators and history buffs eager to buy a new set of "sovereignty-neutral" stamps that will take Hong Kong through the transfer from British to Chinese rule on July 1.

Dropping the Queen's head, said Robert Footman, the colony's postmaster general, was not treason — but pragmatism. "We are operating in the circumstances of transition," he said. "The Queen's head is a symbol of sovereignty and that sovereignty is changing. This is a fact of life. It was never possible to even think about keeping her head."

The new stamps, agreed in concert with China, show Hong Kong's skyline. Old stamps can still be used until June 30, the last day of British rule, but their sale ended last weekend, when post offices sold special Last Day Covers — a small but sobering reminder of a transition that is meant to leave Hong Kong's system intact for at least 50 years but is already bringing myriad modifications.

As the last royal stamps went on sale, Hong Kong's future legislature — an unelected body of 60 pro-China stalwarts — held its first meeting across the border in the Chinese city of Shenzhen. Britain's last colonial governor, Chris Patten, mocked the body as an "exotic debating society". Chinese officials called it the beginning of "real democracy".

Hong Kong's philatelic revolution has also coincided with a furore over whether civil liberties will go the way of the Queen's visage. The disquiet flows from a Chinese plan to neuter a bill of rights and restore colonial-era legislation curtailing the right to assembly and association.

Now barely five months away, the handover has triggered a stampede away from the symbols of royal favour once cherished by nobs and snobs. Almost alone in standing firm against the tide is the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club. A proposal to purge its name has been put to a vote by members twice and rejected both times.

Axing the Queen's head from Hong Kong stamps, like the entire transition to Chinese rule, inspired mixed feelings. "We are Chinese, she is not Chinese," said A K Lau, a pensioner who lined up to buy the new stamps. "I don't really care at all what happens to her. We are going back to China so she must go home."

Mandy Chan, an office clerk, said: "The Queen has been here all my life. I'd like her to stay. Maybe we could have had another lease for another 50 years?"

Writer jailed for exposé

Jane Knight in Caracas

IT IS almost impossible to find in Venezuela's bookshops a copy of How Much Is A Judge Worth? The bestseller has been removed from circulation and its author locked up.

William Ojeda, aged 26, a tabloid and radio journalist, started a year-long prison sentence last week for defaming two judges in his controversial work attacking corruption in the judiciary.

Discussed from government corridors to the slums of the capital, Caracas, his book has highlighted the state of Venezuela's dilapidated judicial system, which even government officials admit is riddled with corruption.

"The corruption is a consequence of a lack of order in Venezuela," said Iván Dario Badell, the government official who oversees the justice system. "Under the current system, there is almost no judicial security."

Mr Ojeda's book includes a list of judges who allegedly abuse their power, and says sources cannot be *revealed for their own safety.* Judges have dismissed the book as corridor gossip. But lawyers and human rights groups agree corruption is widespread.

High-profile cases of judges charged with corruption have not helped the general image. In the most memorable instance, Judge Rosa Natasha Fernández was caught with $882 in bribe money stuffed into her underwear. A police officer put his hand down her knickers to recover the money in front of 40 witnesses.

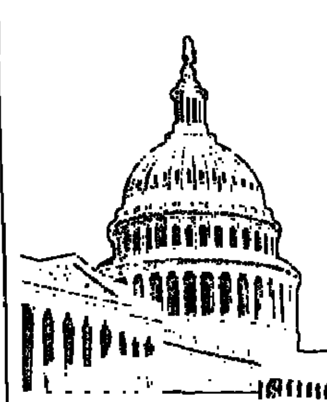
Months earlier, another judge had been found with almost $12,000 in bribe money. When police approached Melida Aleksic Molina's flat, she threw cash out of the window, to the delight of neighbours.

Mr Ojeda's book also details a hierarchy of corruption — from secretaries *charging* exorbitant rates for photocopying and access to the judge, to administrative workers accepting gifts of cars. To smooth the path of justice, lawyers admit that they pay for everything — including getting into the court building without queuing — and that they routinely give administrative workers "tips".

The government accepts the whole system needs to be reformed. President Rafael Caldera, elected on an anti-corruption platform, has proposed the creation of a high commission of justice to reorganise the courts and dismiss corrupt judges.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
February 2 1997

Annan gets red carpet but no greenbacks



The US this week

Martin Walker

IT IS A funny kind of confrontation, and a fishy kind of settlement, when both the bailiff and defaulting debtor shake hands and smile, but no money changes hands. Independent observers might wonder whose side the bailiff was on. The atmosphere in Washington last week to greet the new secretary-general of the United Nations was so upbeat that you had to pinch yourself to remember what was at stake.

Hailed as the first state visit to the new Clinton administration, the UN's new head, Kofi Annan, was given every symbol of American support and goodwill, and a new era of US-UN relations, but so far only promises of the $1.3 billion in cash that the US owes the organisation.

In return, Annan publicly accepted US demands for cuts and substantial reforms, admitting, "If we do not change, we may lose our relevance. What the UN wants is what the US wants, to be effective, efficient, leaner and relevant."

"As long as the UN does its part, we have to pay our debts and pay our dues," Clinton replied. "We cannot sustain our leadership — and our goals for a better world — alone."

The bottom line of Annan's visit to the White House, State Department and Congress was the message that the US would pay off its old debts only if it can cut its UN subsidies in future. In effect, Annan was in Washington to pay discreet fealty to the country that appointed him, and to hear the terms of the financial deal between Washington's factions that will shape the UN's future.

Annan, a veteran UN bureaucrat from Ghana and former head of its peacekeeping wing, was keen to maintain some trappings of independence from the superpower that both hosts and dominates the UN, but acknowledged that little would be achieved without US leadership and support: "We must reform. I will do my part but we are in it together. We hang together or hang separately."

Washington's seduction began as soon as Annan and his Swedish wife, Nane, arrived with a big reception at Blair House hosted by Vice-President Al Gore. The main centre for presidential entertainment, Blair House is just across Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House, and the party for Annan became a celebration for the new secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, who had just been unanimously confirmed in her job by the Senate.

Annan owes his job to Albright's determination to oust Boutros Boutros-Ghali last year, or as she puts it "reminding the secretary-general of his solemn undertaking to serve no more than one term". At the time, no US official dared even hint that Annan was the chosen replacement, even though some very bright State Department minions were told to drop everything and clear his way.

Gore gushed to Annan about how "we respect you for the person you are and the leader you have become — you are among friends".

Then Annan went off to a very special dinner with Tom Lantos and his wife. The new secretary-general's wife happens to be a Wallenberg. Her mother was the half-sister of Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who saved about 100,000 Hungarian Jews from Hitler's death camps before he disappeared into the horror of Stalin's Gulag. One of the Jews Wallenberg saved was a 16-year-old in the anti-Hitler underground called Tom Lantos.

Lantos came to the US, became an economist, and in 1980 was elected congressman for San Mateo county, the peninsula linking San Francisco to California. It is about as liberal as an American constituency gets, so Annan's UN has one dedicated friend in Congress, thanks to the Wallenberg tie.

Later, Annan was given the White House treatment, with one of Clinton's double-grip handshakes that is meant to accord blood-brother status. The mood in the Oval Office was so jolly that the president sat one of Albright's young nephews in his chair, and said: "Start making decisions — you've got a 50-50 chance of being right."



Annan, the new UN secretary-general, beams as Clinton declares the US will find a way to pay its debts PHOTOGRAPH: RICK WILKING

In the Oval Office, Albright was sworn in as the first woman secretary of state. "I am very pleased that the first official visit [to the White House] after the inauguration is that of the secretary-general of the United Nations, and that my first official act as secretary of state is to meet with the president and the secretary-general," she said. "It is a very good sign of the support the US is going to give the UN."

Then Annan went to Capitol Hill to see the Republican leaders, Senator Trent Lott and Speaker Newt Gingrich — not in the least chastened by his reprimand and $300,000 fine for "reckless and repeated" violations of the House ethics rules. Gingrich has discreetly agreed in principle with the Clinton administration that the US share of the UN's annual budget should be cut from 25 per cent to 21.7 per cent, which they claim more properly reflects the US share of the global economy. In return, Republican leaders have quietly promised to support a bill to pay off US arrears, of which the first $100 million can be paid this year, and the rest held in escrow until 1999.

Annan has not moved in quite these circles before. He has been overwhelmed by courtesy, goodwill and the seductive intimacies of the great, which is just as useful a diplomatic tool as gunships and missiles when you know how to use such charms as well as Clinton does.

As Annan left after what he felt was a successful visit to a government that owes the UN $1.3 billion, he said: "Some may say I'm naive because I haven't got the cheque yet. But I'm certain it will come."

The money will come, in grudging dribs and drabs, paid out in a hundred million here and a hundred million there, so long as the UN does what the US Congress wants. But the UN belongs to all 6 billion of us on the planet. It should not just be a useful diplomatic fig leaf for the self-indulgent 250 million whose vast and stupendously endowed land expects overmuch for the privilege of playing host to the only world body we have.

There are times when the UN should defy what the Americans want, as the world should have defied Clinton's fit of the post-Somalia blues and sent in peacekeepers to Rwanda as soon as the UN observers began sending back reports of genocide. And the really good news, for which we have the Scandinavians and Annan to thank, is that the UN appears to be getting a rapid reaction force of its own.

Under a Danish-Dutch-Canadian initiative, the headquarters, company and staff of a new multinational UN standby force, High Readiness Brigade, will be in business by the end of March. Norway, Sweden, Poland and Austria have agreed to join. By the end of next year, a brigade of some 5,000 trained and equipped troops with light armour, helicopters, field hospitals and special engineering facilities should be available to be deployed anywhere in the world within 14 days of the UN Security Council giving the mandate.

Denmark's defence minister, Hans Hakkerup — who has a son with the Danish peacekeepers in Bosnia — said Annan was midwife to the brigade when he ran the UN peacekeeping operation. To have such a brigade on hand would for the first time give UN blue helmets the prospect of fast and effective intervention so long as the Americans and Russians provide the strategic airlift that they alone possess.

Annan is not nearly so naive, nor so much its man, as Washington thinks. The UN is developing a tool that may not be utterly dependent on the US, even as Annan uses the American menace to force the internal reforms that many UN bureaucrats have dreamt of for years.

Quebec separatists fall out with leader

Anne McIlroy in Ottawa

JUST OVER a year ago, Lucien Bouchard was a Messianic figure, a politician who rose from his deathbed and almost led his people to independence in the Quebec referendum. These days, the premier of the mainly francophone province is being burned in effigy by some of those who once marched at his side.

Since becoming premier a year ago, the magic of one of Quebec's most charismatic politicians has been evaporating, and the sovereignty movement, which came within 52,000 votes of splitting Canada in the October 1995 referendum, is now itself split. Separatist hardliners have challenged Mr Bouchard's authority and questioned his commitment to independence.

The man he replaced as premier and head of the Parti Québecois, Jacques Parizeau, has attacked him in the press, saying: "You don't sell sovereignty by hiding it. We drag sovereignty down when we fall into the trap . . . of propaganda that says we must choose between sovereignty or jobs and growth."

But jobs and growth are part of the new promised land Mr Bouchard is selling Québecois. The province, home to a quarter of Canada's population, has the worst unemployment in the country. Its biggest city, Montreal, is the national poverty capital.

Quebec's deficit could reach $4.3 billion this year unless cuts are made, another reason for Mr Bouchard's unpopularity. He has said his government's main goal is to slash public spending. This is hurting some of the strongest supporters of sovereignty, including unions and anti-poverty groups. The Parti Québecois has traditionally been on the left, but Mr Bouchard has taken a neo-conservative direction, alienating some allies.

It is a far cry from late 1994, when thousands held vigils across the province as Mr Bouchard, then head of the federal separatist party, the Bloc Québecois, nearly died from a rare flesh-eating disease. He lost his leg but lived, rushing back into politics when the secessionists' referendum campaign faltered in 1995. Suddenly, Québecois too were interested in the campaign.

Now he is seeking closer ties with the federal government, even taking part in a trade mission to Asia led by the prime minister, Jean Chrétien.

Mr Bouchard has also trampled one of the Parti Québecois' sacred cows — a ban on the use of English on commercial signs. He says bilingual signs must be allowed.

Then there is his fuzzy approach to sovereignty. When he does talk of Quebec becoming sovereign, it is always within the framework of a continued political and economic association with Canada. It is a vague idea that bewilders and angers the rest of the country, but comforts Québecois, who want independence but worry about the costs.

It was during the 1995 referendum campaign that Mr Bouchard, still a federal politician, began offering Québecois a new partnership with Canada. Because of his political manoeuvring, the referendum question was on a partnership, not outright separation. Mr Bouchard says this is why the sovereignty lobby came so close to winning.

His provincial allies in the Parti Québecois went along with his approach because the only other option was a devastating loss. After the referendum, Mr Parizeau stood down as premier and Mr Bouchard took over. In December, he further alienated hardliners in his own party by lobbying to have the partnership ideal included in its platform.

The Parti Québecois is one of Canada's most fractious and uncontrollable parties. Its democratic rules allow the rank and file to challenge their leader, and at their convention last year they did so. Mr Bouchard swept out of the convention and reportedly threatened to quit. When enough of his challengers apologised, he agreed to return, later denying he had been upset.

The stage is set for a purge of hardliners from the Parti Québecois or an early election so Mr Bouchard can put his policies to the people.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
February 2 1997

The Week in Britain James Lewis

Outcry as living history survey is suspended

THE GOVERNMENT was this week due to publish the 1997 issue of its admirable General Household Survey (GHS), a comprehensive compilation of key social statistics that is used to determine future policy in areas such as health, housing and education. There are fears, however, that this issue could be the last. Fieldwork on the next issue has been suspended in order to save money.

GHS is produced by the Office for National Statistics, which is ditching the survey to save a mere £500,000 this year. The decision has caused outrage among academics, who argue that the survey is an irreplaceable tool, enabling researchers to compile a statistical picture of Britons, bringing together details of their housing, income and jobs.

Activities that are suspended have a habit of remaining suspended unless there is a loud public outcry. Academics, led by Denise Lievesley, director of the definitive data archive at Essex university, are campaigning to save the survey, claiming that to scrap it would fly in the face of the Government's policy of providing reliable statistics.

The GHS and its predecessor, Social Trends, have often produced valuable evidence — about the growing gap between rich and poor, for example — which ministers would prefer not to see. And compilers have sometimes come under pressure to play down awkward findings, such as those about the nature and effects of unemployment.

Campaigners for retention of the GHS are expected to urge that, if money really has to be saved, the survey should be conducted every two years, rather than be dispensed with altogether.

THE COMMANDER of British forces in the Gulf war, General Sir Peter de la Billière (now retired), reacted with restraint when he was banned by the Ministry of Defence from visiting the depots of his former regiment, the SAS. "It's a matter between me and the ministry," he said.

The ban was applied to all those who have written books about the secretive SAS, including the best-selling Bravo Two Zero author, Andy McNab. The ministry said those who had revealed SAS secrets would no longer be invited to dinners, reunions and remembrance services at the regiment's HQ in Hereford, and other secret locations around the country.

But Sir Peter, Britain's most decorated officer, said that his two books — his autobiography, and an account of the Gulf war — had both been cleared by the regiment and the MoD, "and I took out everything they asked me to take out". No one had ever said they posed a security risk, and both had become textbooks for military staff colleges.

The general's real "offence" was probably that his book paved the way for a wave of other books leading to fears that the regiment's mystique was being sacrificed.

A NEW FORCE of military cadets is planned by the Government, purportedly to instil a greater sense of self-discipline, loyalty and fitness in the nation's teenagers — and possibly to win a few more votes from the flag-waving fraternity.

Interested youngsters can already join Army, Navy and Air Force cadet corps, which exist in more than 3,000 towns and villages. And more exclusive Combined Cadet Corps operate in 198 private schools and 45 state schools. It is on the latter that the Defence Secretary, Michael Portillo, intends to concentrate millions of pounds to attract the "disadvantaged" young.

The scheme won a mixed reception: amused cynicism from former cadets (Mr Portillo avoided the cadets as a schoolboy) and fury from the anti-gun lobby, which was dismayed at the prospect of rifle-toting youngsters.

THE DEPUTY Prime Minister, Michael Heseltine, is still thought of as a big hitter, but he went too far when he denounced the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) as a "Labour front organisation". The institute was launching a weighty report, Promoting Prosperity, written by leading businessmen and academics, on how to improve the country's economic performance. Mr Heseltine dismissed the authors as "Labour stooges".

The IPPR, though undoubtedly left-leaning, is entirely independent of the Labour party. What stung Mr Heseltine was that the report backed Labour's plans for a minimum wage and for adopting the European Union's social chapter — both ideas that Labour has found hard to sell to the business community.

MYRA HINDLEY, who has already served 30 years in prison for her complicity in the murder of five children, is to appeal through the courts against a ruling by the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, that she should never be released. Her case, essentially, is that sentencing should be a judicial exercise, not a political one; and that release dates should be decided by parole experts, not by a politician seeking re-election.

The killings by Miss Hindley and Ian Brady all those years ago were savage in the extreme, but the demonisation of the "moors murderers" by the Fleet Street tabloids ever since has fed the public lust for revenge that the criminal justice system was designed to assuage.





A protester awaits the bailiffs at Fairmile, where five activists are holed up underground PHOTO: ANDREW

Protesters dig deep to save trees

Geoffrey Gibbs

THREE activists have spent days underground in a rat-infested tunnel called Big Momma, as bailiffs adopted a softly-softly approach to clearing the route of a £50 million road through Devon.

Trevor Coleman, the under sheriff of Devon, surprised campaigners on Thursday last week by storming the Fairmile camp near Honiton while some of them were at a pub.

Fairmile, at the top of a gentle slope, is one of three camps along the 13-mile route of a dual carriageway to link the Honiton bypass with the M5 motorway. The road is being built by an Anglo-German consortium under the Government's private finance initiative.

Mr Coleman cheekily said he had chosen to move on Fairmile on a Thursday because he knew some living there would have received their benefit payments and gone to the pub.

But three fellow anti-roads activists dug themselves in deep. They faced their sixth consecutive night underground on Tuesday, retreating deeper into a labyrinth of tunnels as bailiffs moved in. Two activists, who had been with them since last Thursday, were arrested on Monday.

The protesters issued six conditions for ending their occupation. These included a demand that the Highways Agency reveal the financial details of the road to public scrutiny, and a halt to all construction until a public inquiry had been held into the "Design, Build, Finance and Operate" system, under which the road is being built by the Anglo-German consortium.

These were rejected as "totally unacceptable" by Mr Coleman, who said he had no power to negotiate.

The protesters were showing no inclination to come out. "Each time we go through a door they move back behind another one," he said.

The protesters, holed up in the cramped, hand-constructed underground network, were said to be equipped with candles and sleeping bags as well as plentiful supplies. Air is being pumped in to them.

Meanwhile on Sunday a group of protesters, mostly local people, set up camp along the path of the second runway at Manchester airport.

Approval for the £170 million second runway was announced in the Commons on January 15.

● People attending a wide range of peaceful gatherings, including environmental protesters and rambler groups, can be arrested for doing nothing more than walking down the road, following a High Court judgment last week. Under the offence of trespassory assembly, police can ban groups of 20 or more meeting in a particular area if they fear "serious disruption to the life of the community", even if the meeting is non-obstructive and non-violent.

'Big car' Britain, page 19

Clark wins shock return

Rebecca Smithers

THE controversial former minister and self-confessed adulterer Alan Clark staged a dramatic political comeback last week when Tories in Kensington and Chelsea selected him to contest their prestigious London constituency at the next election.

Mr Clark is guaranteed to win the seat — a traditional Tory enclave and one of the safest in the country — to succeed the disgraced sitting MP Sir Nicholas Scott, who was deselected at the end of last year.

Despite fears of a puritanical backlash following Sir Nicholas's fall from grace after a series of drink-related accidents, the former defence minister won the nomination in a close-run race after three ballots.

The only female candidate, Patricia Morris, was eliminated after the first ballot. Then local councillor Daniel Moylan dropped out when he failed to win enough votes in the second ballot. Mr Clark beat Martin Howe in the third and final ballot.

A victorious Mr Clark emerged from a packed three-and-a-half-hour meeting with his long-suffering wife, Jane, to declare: "This is an absolutely tremendous honour for me to have been chosen to represent the strongest Conservative division in the country."

He pledged that he would "behave in a manner that is suitable and proper", and claimed that he was never deliberately flamboyant: "I am what I am."

Mr Clark gave up his Plymouth Sutton seat at the last election after 18 years in Parliament, but has made little secret of his desire to return to Westminster. Ironically, he has made more impact on public life since leaving Parliament, through the publication of his controversial diaries and his confessions about his adulterous private life. He applied to contest the seat when it was redrawn under boundary changes in 1995, but failed to make the shortlist.

Mr Clark, who turns 69 in April, had earlier conceded that his age and sexual history might stand in his way. Among his many conquests, he had an affair with a judge's wife and both her daughters, but had the grace to say he deserved to be horsewhipped.

Mr Clark's success was virtually guaranteed, one insider said, after he had delivered "an absolutely brilliant performance, the only candidate who seemed to have the future of the Conservative party at the centre of his campaign, not just his own".

Comment, page 12

Ministers get £½m pay-off

David Hencke

TAXPAYERS have paid out nearly £500,000 in tax-free "golden handshakes" to 71 ministers who have resigned from John Major's government since 1992, according to figures prepared by the Commons library for Ian McCartney, Labour's employment spokesman.

The ministers are all entitled to a quarter of their ministerial salaries, excluding their pay as MPs. The highest payments have been to members of the Lords, with Lord Rodger, the lord advocate, receiving £13,852.

Among MPs the top payments were £8,658 to the former Welsh secretary John Redwood, who resigned to challenge Mr Major's leadership, and £8,048 to Norman Lamont, the former chancellor, who resigned after "Black Wednesday".

Payment to ministers caught in sleaze and sex scandals include £5,276 to Tim Yeo, the former environment minister who fathered an illegitimate child. Neil Hamilton and Tim Smith, the ministers who quit after the Guardian's "cash for questions" scandal, received £3,532 each.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
February 2 1997

In Brief

MICHAEL GRADE, Britain's most colourful television mogul, has stunned the media industry by quitting as Channel 4's chief executive to pursue other business interests.

THE Home Secretary, Michael Howard, launched a challenge to a Court of Appeal ruling that the 15-year minimum term he imposed on the 10-year-old killers of toddler James Bulger was unlawful.

THOUSANDS of packets of Milupa Milumil baby milk were taken off the shelves after health experts linked it with 12 cases of salmonella.

ELEVEN asylum-seekers at Rochester prison in Kent are close to death after they stopped taking fluids as part of a hunger strike that began on January 6 in protest at being held in a prison rather than an immigration detention centre.

AN 86-year-old woman has died in the Scottish food poisoning outbreak, bringing the *E.coli* death toll to 18.

MIXED wards in hospitals are to be scrapped to improve patient privacy, the Health Secretary, Stephen Dorrell, said.

THREE youths have been arrested in connection with a machete attack on a 14-year-old schoolboy at the gates of his southeast London school.

HEALTH officials say there are no plans to withdraw an anti-malaria drug — mefloquine, marketed as Lariam — despite the death of a six-year-old girl from side-effects.

THE Home Office is considering sending the case of James Hanratty to the Court of Appeal, paving the way for him to be declared innocent 35 years after his execution for the notorious A6 murder.

MORE THAN 100 prisoners were moved to 23 jails around the country from Full Sutton maximum security prison, near York, after 12 hours of rioting and vandalism wrecked large parts of the jail.

ABOUT 76,000 blank birth certificates have been reported stolen, MPs discovered during an inquiry into child benefit fraud.

SEAMUS HEANEY won the £21,000 Whitbread Book of the Year award for his collection of poetry, The Spirit Level.

EDITH HAISMAN, Britain's oldest survivor of the Titanic disaster, has died. She celebrated her 100th birthday last October.

Plan to sell Inland Revenue

David Hencke

PLANS for the wholesale privatisation of the Inland Revenue, involving the sale of 450 offices and the introduction of private contractors to assess tax returns, aimed at raising £250 million a year, are being drawn up for the Conservative manifesto.

John Major and his Cabinet held five hours of talks at Chequers on Monday to thrash out the details of manifesto pledges that will cover education, pensions, the National Lottery and the welfare state, as well as privatisation of Whitehall and other services.

The day also saw the Government's critical position exposed as it suffered its first Commons defeat this parliamentary session, by one vote on an amendment to the Education Bill. Labour claimed the government defeat — by 273 to 272 — was due to a "highly successful ambush". Forty-six Tory MPs, including five cabinet ministers, were absent for the vote.

The change would have relaxed controls to allow grant-maintained schools to expand and increase their provision by more than 50 per cent.

The Guardian has learnt that ministers have ordered the Inland Revenue to look at its sale along the lines of the benefits offices sell-off.

The sale is expected to mean the loss of thousands of jobs at the Revenue, which has 60,000 staff, with at least 100 offices earmarked for closure. Handing over the running of its computer to the American firm EDS has already led to staff cuts.

The new proposals, revealed in a confidential letter dated last month, go much further, since the Government is proposing to sell the offices to a private firm.

Derek Foster, Labour's public services spokesman, said: "From the details we have gleaned the Government appears to be galloping towards a sell-off without even checking whether the £250 million price tag is enough. I am alarmed that the taxpayer could be swindled by this deal." He added: "The Conservatives have reduced themselves to the role of the nation's pawnbroker, desperately flogging off anything they can get their hands on."

Privatisation is to be given high priority in the Tory manifesto, as part of plans to push government expenditure below 40 per cent of the gross domestic product.

The privatisations canvassed include the Post Office, London Underground, National Savings and the social services.

The fragility of Mr Major's government has been increasingly in evidence since the start of the 1997 parliamentary session last week.

In a debate on the health service last week, two Tory MPs were brought to Westminster by ambulance to vote. The day before, the Government had scraped in by one vote on an amendment on the Crime and Punishment (Scotland) Bill. In the Lords, the Government suffered two defeats over bugging in the Police Bill last week, and a further defeat over compensation for gun shops on the following day.

Head first . . . A participant in last Sunday's march in London of the 'Kings Army', part of the English Civil War Society, which re-enacts the wars of Charles I and Parliament PHOTOGRAPH: RAY LITTLE

Ford race dispute ends

Seumas Milne

FORD is to pay seven Asian and Afro-Caribbean car workers at its Dagenham plant in Essex more than £70,000 compensation for racial discrimination after they were turned down for jobs in the company's élite truck fleet.

The company reached a last-minute agreement with the Transport and General Workers' Union on Monday on new recruitment procedures for drivers' jobs just as the dispute was due to return to a London industrial tribunal.

The deal, which will introduce an independent assessor into truck fleet recruitment — currently under the control of senior drivers — was hailed by the union and the black workers as a breakthrough in a dispute which has been running since 1990.

But John Cheshire, leader of the 300 truck fleet drivers, said they were in dispute with the union over "the way they have conducted business with us", and renewed a threat to take his powerful group of workers into the small, rival United Road Transport Union.

However, Bob Purkiss, TGWU national equality officer, who said he was very happy with the settlement, warned the drivers that any attempt to go it alone would play into the hands of the company, which has already tried unsuccessfully to contract out their work.

If the truck fleet workers carry out their threat, it is likely to spark a poaching row within the Trades Union Congress. A URTU official argued that the agreement exonerated the drivers of accusations of racist recruitment practices.

About 45 per cent of Ford production workers at Dagenham are from ethnic minorities, but they account for 1.8 per cent of the coveted drivers' jobs, which often pass from father to son. Annual pay for truck fleet drivers is about £32,000, compared with £16,000 for shopfloor workers.

One of the seven workers said: "We are very bitter it has taken this long, but we are happy with the outcome for future generations."

Mayhew rails at IRA violence

David Sharrock

SIR Patrick Mayhew on Monday made his most aggressive denunciation of the IRA since the collapse of the ceasefire, signalling a further deterioration in the security situation.

The Northern Ireland Secretary said: "If you go on with your violence you will never wear the people of Northern Ireland down. We will pursue you with every means open to us under the law.

"We shall never give up. We shall go to any expense. You will never be safe. In the end you will spend long years of your lives in prison, convicted often upon information from within your own community, whom you have disgusted by your actions."

Speaking after loyalist involvement in the Stormont peace talks was guaranteed for the time being, Sir Patrick launched an attack on the Provisionals the strength of which was being read as a further sign that Ulster may be about to descend into further violence.

He said that Sinn Fein — which is excluded from the resumed Stormont talks — was inextricably linked with the IRA and would not be welcome at the negotiating table until the bullet was forsaken for the ballot box.

The political development minister, Michael Ancram, said that in spite of recent attacks on republicans, which the RUC has linked to "loyalist extremists", he did not believe that the Progressive Unionist Party or the Ulster Democratic Party had dishonoured their commitment to peaceful methods.

He was speaking as politicians gathered at Stormont for this year's first full session of talks, which have failed to move beyond the issue of decommissioning paramilitary arms.

● A former Catholic bishop of Derry who witnessed the killing of 13 people on Bloody Sunday 25 years ago, has called for a new inquiry into the affair.

Edward Daly said that new evidence should be examined which points to the participation of soldiers other than paratroopers, firing from Derry's city walls or near them.

Labour targets criminals

Ewen MacAskill

LABOUR is proposing a radical change to the legal system that would see professional criminals being given an ultimatum: pay your defence costs or face an extra prison sentence.

The plan, being drawn up by Labour's legal affairs spokesman, Paul Boateng, is aimed at addressing public outrage over criminals who receive legal aid even though their lifestyles and other evidence point to them having money stashed away.

Mr Boateng, Labour MP for Brent South, says Labour, anxious to reduce the spiralling legal aid bill, is looking to see "if more resources can be saved by requiring the convicted defendant who is found in the course of the trial to have access to the proceeds of crime or other funds or a lifestyle consistent with such access to pay for the assessed costs of his defence.

"The judge will make the determination; no extra bureaucracy is required. In default, the defendant will serve an additional prison sentence. That is likely to provide the incentive to reveal funds hitherto mysteriously unavailable for paying his own lawyers."

A Labour source said this could mean that if a criminal was sentenced to four years in jail, the judge would be able to offer him a choice between paying defence costs or facing a further two years in jail. The source said it would not apply to a criminal who clearly had no money, such as a drug addict.

The idea could cause concern among civil liberty groups, particularly over where the line should be drawn between those criminals who have money hidden away and those who do not.

The proposal is said to have the support of Lord Irvine of Lairg, who is in line to become Lord Chancellor if Labour wins the election.

The plan offers an opportunity to help reduce legal aid. With the shadow chancellor, Gordon Brown, having capped public spending, each department would have to find internal savings under Labour.

Royal family dragged into yacht row

Guardian Reporters

JOHN MAJOR and Michael Portillo took a secret decision four months ago to delay the announcement of a new £60 million royal yacht until last week so it could become part of a populist appeal to wavering Tory voters in the run-up to the general election.

A joint decision was taken at Downing Street by the Prime Minister and the Defence Secretary at the time of the Tory party conference. Mr Portillo said the decision revealed Conservative support for "a symbol of the nation's pride".

"It will be designed to exhibit an enduring level of style, elegance and dignity appropriate to its role and should act as a showcase for Britain's design and engineering skills," *he said.*

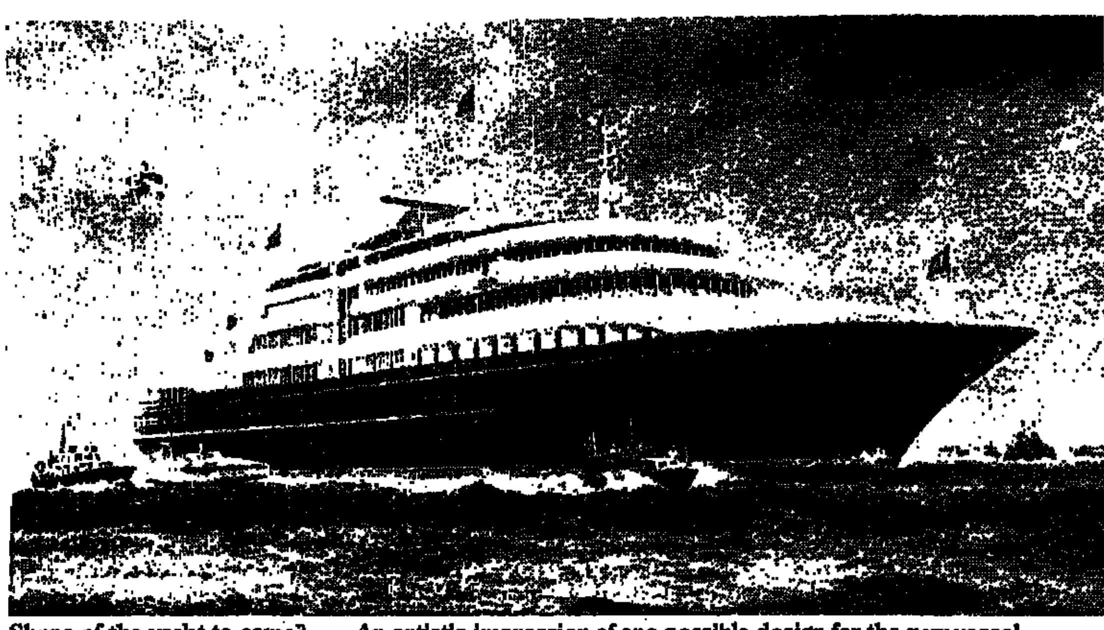
The decision to build a replacement for the royal yacht Britannia, which has just started its last tour, was kept from the Labour party in the hope that it would become a party political issue, catching them flat-footed.

David Clark, the shadow defence secretary, was not told about the announcement until the day before and there was no mention of it in November's Budget.

Critics have expressed surprise at the decision to build another royal yacht. The Government announced in 1994 that Britannia would be decommissioned after repair costs were revealed to be nearly £20 million.

Whitehall was said to be then working on a private finance initiative that would provide a replacement at no cost to the taxpayer. After a campaign to save the yacht, the private scheme was abandoned, and the total bill will be paid by the Government.

Alan Williams, Labour MP for Swansea West and a strong critic of government spending on the royal family, said: "With three years of unprecedented cuts in social services spending planned, we do not need to spend £60 million on a royal yacht."



Shape of the yacht to come? . . . An artist's impression of one possible design for the new vessel

The Queen herself was dragged into the row about the royal yacht when Mr Portillo accused Labour of having "no understanding of the monarchy" after it told her that a Blair government would not fund the £60 million replacement.

The shadow chancellor, Gordon Brown, let the Queen know that Labour would not pay for the yacht solely out of taxpayers' money, although it would be prepared to consider funding packages proposed by the private sector.

The row intensified over the weekend as senior Tories controversially embroiled the monarchy in party politics, with both the Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, and the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, criticising Labour's "foolish" decision.

Buckingham Palace repeated the Queen's view that she considers Britannia an important national asset. But sources made it clear that she was furious about the way the royal family has been dragged into the centre of the election campaign, just as it is fighting to restore its public image.

The Queen is also unhappy about the way the Government made the announcement in the Commons last week — attracting uproar from the opposition benches because it had failed to consult them.

German shipyards later indicated that they were keen to build the replacement royal yacht as it became clear European Union rules could force the Government to open up the tendering process. The prospect of a non-UK company winning the contract would deepen the row over the decision to use taxpayers' money.

In three telephone polls, the public voted against public expenditure being used by a margin of two to one. Newspaper polls in the Sun and Mirror also gave the plan an overwhelming thumbs down.

Despite the poll findings, Mr Portillo again ruled out private funding. "If the state has one duty above others, it is to support the monarchy, and I think we must do that wholeheartedly, and I think it's perfectly right to spend taxpayers' money upon that," he said.

But strong criticism came from the former prime minister Sir Edward Heath, who told BBC radio on Monday that ministers' behaviour was "not honourable". Central office sources admitted they were furious that the public comments by senior Tories such as Sir Edward had fanned the flames of the row.

Britannia, which will be decommissioned later this year after a final round-the-world trip ending in Hong Kong when the colony is handed over to China, has been used on 700 trips over 43 years.

Comment, page 12

Portillo swims in deep water

SKETCH
Simon Hoggart

JOHN WILKINSON (Conservative, Northwood) inquired of Mr Portillo if he might congratulate his right honourable friend on "an admirable decision, expressed in the most felicitous language".

Once MPs always lapsed into this ermine-clad prose whenever the topic of the royal family arose. It is glutinous and sycophantic, as if they were stroking the Orb, or slurping on the Great Sceptre of State.

Mr Portillo couldn't work out precisely why the Government *was proposing to spend* £60 million on a new royal yacht. Britannia "has lent her prestige to the promotion of British exports worldwide and the attraction of inward investment, and has hosted numerous commercial events," he said, somewhat infelicitously, I thought.

If that were so, why not just call it the Everest Double-Glazing Royal Yacht? We've flogged off everything else.

Apparently this will not do. As well as being a nice little earner, the royal equivalent of Del Boy's Robin Reliant, the yacht is also a symbol of our national spirit.

Labour's spokesman, David Clark, clearly hadn't spotted that he was dealing with a piece of chutzpah breathtaking even by the standards of the present Government. He naively inquired why the Opposition had not been consulted before. (Answer: Because the Tories didn't want agreement; they wanted a publicity stunt.) Then he asked why Mr Portillo had rejected, "in such a cavalier manner, the injection of private capital?"

The sight of a Labour frontbencher demanding private spending on public projects reduced the Tories to helpless laughter. Labour MPs split into two groups, the first being those such as Peter Shore, who stood stiffly to attention, as if sailing into Portsmouth harbour.

Others, by contrast, produced lists of ways in which the money could be better spent: pensioners, schools, hospitals, cold weather allowances, and so on. Mr Portillo told them that they didn't understand concepts such as "national esteem and national pride".

Tories urged a yacht Robert Maxwell would have envied. One demanded an on-board helicopter pad, and was promised it would be there. ("And a casino," growled Dennis Skinner.)

At one point Nicholas Soames appeared in danger of collapse at some humorous remark I missed. His shoulders heaved, he mopped his eyes, and his bald head turned puce, then crimson and, finally, a rich, dark heliotrope as his whole frame began to shake alarmingly.

He had barely recovered when Robert Key (C. Salisbury) asked ponderously what the new yacht would be called. "Camilla!" shouted Dennis Skinner. Even the Speaker collapsed in giggles, and Mr Soames was off again. It was a terrible moment but, like the yacht, he has been saved for the nation at the last moment.

Major vetoes racism fight

John Palmer in Brussels

JOHN MAJOR'S pre-election campaign to present himself as a champion of Britain's ethnic minorities will be seriously undermined this week by the Government's veto of a plan to establish a European Union centre to monitor racism and xenophobia throughout the union.

Britain's veto of the project — which is backed by the other 14 EU governments — means the centre cannot form part of the launch this week of the European Year Against Racism.

Ethnic-minority groups in Britain, which support the establishment of the EU centre, believe that the British veto exposes the hollowness of the Prime Minister's recent declarations against racism, in India and Pakistan and at conferences of Asian organisations in Britain. Last weekend, Mr Major launched a drive to woo Asian voters, claiming the Conservative party was their natural home.

The director of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, Claude Moraes, said the veto was proof of the Government's apathy towards improving race relations in Europe. "The veto lets the Government's mask slip. It doesn't stand up to its boast that Britain has the best race relations legislation in Europe."

But on Monday the Home Office minister, Timothy Kirkhope, told a conference on anti-semitism and racism in Europe that the Government supported the idea of a monitoring unit controlled by governments, not made subject to EU laws.

The proposal to set up an EU anti-racist monitoring centre follows mounting evidence that racist, neo-Nazi and other far-right groups are developing links across Europe. Last week, Danish and Swedish police intercepted an attempt by neo-Nazi groups operating under the leadership of the British Combat 18 faction to send letter bombs to mixed-race couples in Britain.

EU governments are particularly angry with Britain's refusal to approve the creation of the monitoring centre since they had earlier been given the impression that approval would be forthcoming.

Wim Kok, the Dutch prime minister and president of the European Council, and Jacques Santer, the president of the Commission, had hoped to announce an agreement on the centre when they launch the year against racism in The Hague on January 30.

The main purpose of the centre would be to collect and analyse data from all member states and set up a racism and xenophobia information network.

Blair offers lone parents work

Ewen MacAskill

THE Labour leader, Tony Blair, last week unveiled a package of measures to help lone parents off benefits and into employment.

Mr Blair, who put his party on a renewed general election alert amid speculation of a March poll, is determined to present Labour as having positive plans for government in contrast to what it claims is negative campaigning by the Conservatives.

At a conference in Amsterdam, he promised that under Labour lone parents with children of school age will be invited to attend a local Job-Centre for a careers interview. They will also be informed about local childcare and after-school clubs.

Labour says far more lone parents depend on state benefits in Britain than in comparable countries. Only four out of 10 lone parents work in Britain, compared with seven out of 10 in Sweden and eight out of 10 in France.

"They are trapped on benefit because there is a passive welfare state, no national childcare strategy, an inflexible benefits system, lack of education and skills. The people who bear the brunt are children. One in three children in poverty are in lone-parent households," Mr Blair said.

Half of unemployed lone parents have children at school, yet the social security system ignores them. "It just sends them cheques and occasionally checks their addresses." They receive no encouragement to get back to work and do not have to be available for work until their youngest child is 16.

But sources close to the Labour leader have stressed that there will be no move to force lone parents to work.

Labour also plans to introduce a "flexible and personalised" benefits service by introducing "one-stop shops" and a new jobs, education and training scheme.

It also emerged that a Labour government would mobilise volunteer "foster grannies" to help educate children when parents and teachers found it difficult to cope. The scheme is already being piloted by Age Concern.

Health visitors, some equipped with books and puppets, would help parents to promote literacy and numeracy through play, as well as giving advice on such things as measles and feeding, David Blunkett, the party's education spokesman, told a conference.

Meanwhile students at secondary schools and colleges would be given lessons on parenting in a revised national curriculum as part of the party's drive to break the vicious cycle of low aspirations and educational failure.

Inquiry call as trial collapses

Alan Travis and Lawrence Donegan

THE TRIAL of five IRA men and an armed robber charged with escaping from the maximum security Whitemoor prison collapsed last week because incriminating publicity meant they could not get a fair hearing.

A decision will be taken within a month on whether the editor of the London Evening Standard, Max Hastings, will be prosecuted for contempt of court. The newspaper had run an article that included an inside description of Belmarsh prison, where the defendants were held near Woolwich crown court.

It also had an interview with inmates and photographs of three of the defendants, describing them as "IRA terrorists" and detailing their convictions for bombing and political assassination. If found guilty, Mr Hastings could face a two-year jail sentence and an unlimited fine.

The six defendants on trial for one of the most dramatic attempted break-outs for many years were all Category A exceptional risk prisoners held inside the special secure unit at Whitemoor prison. They are Paul Magee, aged 48; Liam McCotter, 33; Daniel McNamee, 36; Liam O'Duibhir, 34; Peter Sherry, 31; and Andrew Russell, 34.

All denied breaking out of the prison, possessing a Titan .25S automatic handgun and an RG .25 automatic pistol with intent to harm, and possessing both firearms with intent to break prison. Magee also denied assaulting a prison officer, John Kettleborough, causing him actual bodily harm.

It was the second time that the trial had been abandoned because of prejudicial publicity. The first jury was dismissed after the first day at Woolwich crown court in September, after several newspapers published details of the men's previous convictions and their IRA connections, in breach of a court ruling.

During the second hearing, the jury heard evidence from senior prison service figures contradicting evidence given to the official Woodcock inquiry into the escape.

Lawyers for the defendants have called for a fresh public inquiry after claims that the perimeter fence of the maximum security jail had been cut in advance.

Michael Mansfield QC, defence counsel for one of the convicted IRA men, said evidence yet to be heard would have shown the men received outside assistance in their attempted escape in September 1994. Vital video tapes showing the crucial moment when the prisoners went through a perimeter fence at the high security jail had "disappeared", he said.

The row erupted as Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, said that he was considering giving prosecutors the right to appeal against a court's decision to abandon trials.

Mr Howard said the breakout had been thoroughly examined by a previous inquiry, and that the abandonment of the trial for a second time had important legal ramifications. "The decision in this case raises serious questions about whether there should be an opportunity to review on appeal decisions of this kind," he said.

Any legislative change giving the prosecution the right to appeal could be seen as a further erosion of judicial independence, although a spokeswoman for the Lord Chancellor's department said Lord Mackay of Clashfern was "very supportive" of Mr Howard's view.

Meanwhile a Conservative MP has called for a police investigation into possible links between the disappearance of a prison officer at Whitemoor and the attempted break-out.

Ian Bruce, the MP for Dorset South and a former parliamentary aide to prisons minister Ann Widdecombe, said he was seeking a fresh inquiry into the disappearance of Peter Curran, a prison officer at the Cambridgeshire jail who has been missing for almost two years.

Mr Curran, aged 38, was last seen on March 14, 1995, when he left home to play golf. His wife, Christine, said she believed her husband was dead.

Two days before he disappeared, Mr Curran was suspended from his job at Whitemoor for allegedly supplying prisoners with toiletries.

Mr Bruce's comments follow the death of another Whitemoor prison officer. Marcia Whitehurst, aged 37, died when her car plunged into a river near Wisbech. She was driving to court to give evidence at the aborted trial of the six men accused of trying to escape in September 1994. She had been in the prison control room during the break-out and was due to be cross-examined about her entries in a log book.

Mr Bruce's comments will add to the pressure on Mr Howard to hold a fresh inquiry into the break-out.

MPs attack witness payments

Andrew Culf

CHEQUEBOOK journalism involving trial witnesses should be outlawed, MPs said last week.

The national heritage select committee said there were no circumstances in which such payment to a witness by newspapers or broadcasters would be justified by the public interest. Its recommendations, denounced as bordering on censorship by press watchdogs, go further than proposals made last year by the Lord Chancellor.

The committee, chaired by the Labour MP Gerald Kaufman, said legislation should be passed at the earliest date. It demanded the Press Complaints Commission change its rules so that it could impose heavy fines on offending newspapers and order them to pay compensation.

Mr Kaufman said: "A reprimand from the PCC is a slap on the wrist. Fining would tell editors these matters are taken very seriously."

The committee's tough line followed concern about the 1995 trial of mass murderer Rosemary West, in which 19 witnesses were reported to have signed contracts or to have been paid by the media.

The report said: "We cannot in any circumstances accept the view that the need to publish material from a witness can override the possible damage to a trial from paying for it."

If the proposals became law, a newspaper could not approach a witness until the time limit for an appeal against a verdict had expired.

The Government has to make a response to the committee's proposals, but the imminence of the general election makes legislation unlikely in the present Parliament.

The committee said it would be difficult to define the public interest. "Time and again the PCC's reaction is to offer half measures when radical change is called for . . . We do not accept that the PCC cannot provide itself with authority to fine or to order the payment of compensation. In addition we recommend that offending journalists be publicly named in a report."

But the MPs' conclusions were greeted with dismay by the PCC. It had moved to tighten the public interest justification for payment to witnesses, which would have to be disclosed to the prosecution and defence.

"We remain strongly of the view that changes to the code, which has been significantly toughened, means there is no need for legislation."

Tribunal hears of 'endless' child abuse allegations

David Ward

COUNCIL officials deliberately closed their eyes to "seemingly endless" allegations of abuse at children's homes in North Wales over more than 20 years, an inquiry heard last week.

Gerald Elias, QC, counsel to the tribunal ordered by Parliament last year, said in his opening address that some alleged victims had been driven to suicide. Others had given cogent and consistent statements.

"If accepted by this tribunal, then it may be they will compel the conclusion that children in care in Clwyd and Gwynedd . . . were abused physically or sexually on a scale bordering on wholesale exploitation."

The tribunal, chaired by Sir Ronald Waterhouse, a retired high court judge, could last a year and cost £10 million. Evidence will be given by 180 former residents of homes who allege abuse, and 80 alleged abusers have been ordered to appear at hearings in Ewloe, Flintshire.

The tribunal follows an inquiry by Clwyd county council. Its findings, completed last year, were not published. Eight people were prosecuted after an investigation by North Wales police in 1991-92 and six convicted of offences involving physical or sexual abuse of children.

Mr Elias said if wholesale abuse had occurred, social services staff at best were careless about the plight of children in their care and at worst "negligent to the point of gross professional incompetence, or even guilty of deliberate eye-closing" to the state of affairs in some homes.

Andrew Moran QC told the tribunal that officers from the North Wales force had carried out inquiries with integrity, determination and skill after being called in by Clwyd county council in 1991. He dismissed an allegation that an officer had failed to investigate a case of abuse because of masonic influence, saying none was a member of the order. He rejected the "untruths and innuendo" levelled against the force, which could show it had responded properly to abuse allegations.

Meanwhile Mr Elias said Zurich Municipal, handling agents for Municipal Mutual Insurance, wrote to Clwyd council suggesting insurance cover could be withdrawn if the procedures the company set out were not followed.

"The need for public debate of the nature and extent of abuse took second place to the 'financial considerations' in the mind of [Zurich]," he said. "Even the 'truth' was regarded as a casualty if financial considerations were at stake."



Vietnam on the Mediterranean

THE ALGERIAN agony gets worse: it also becomes an even more intractable conflict. More than 200 people have died since the start of Ramadan. Those murdered by government militia or in reprisals on civilians are not listed. It is, like all internal conflicts, vicious on both sides. The regime's security forces use napalm, torture prisoners and punish civilians. The Muslim fundamentalist armed groups plant bombs in city markets — as with last week's first bomb in the town of Blida — where maximum carnage will be caused. Government ministers are no longer pretending that only "residual terrorism" remains after five years of fighting. Whatever else may be obscure about this appalling conflict, it has by now assumed the character of a civil war.

The latest bombings also suggest an important shift of strategy by the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), which leads the fundamentalist assault on the army-dominated government. The security forces have succeeded in penetrating many of the no-go areas in the Algerian countryside. By simple repression, by raising militia with the promise of generous pay, and perhaps by covertly encouraging smaller extremist groups, they have created their own version of terror. This is one reason for the guerrillas' shift into the urban areas.

The second factor driving the guerrillas is a calculation familiar from many previous civil wars — including the one in Algeria four decades ago. It is the need to ensure that the country does not fade from the headlines, that the foreign governments accepting — *faute de mieux* — the current regime have some incentive to reconsider their policy and that the fiction of an improvement in the situation *is brutally exposed. If necessary, ordinary civilians* (who may sympathise with the fundamentalists) will be sacrificed to make the point. Some may even die at the mosque, as was claimed for one recent incident, although that could equally well be a "provocation".

Could any of this have been avoided? It has become idle to argue whether or not the annulment of parliamentary elections — after the Islamic Salvation Front won the first round — was wise or justified. The clock cannot be turned back that far. What is clear is that since then the regime has been bereft of wit or imagination to provide a political alternative that might either entice or isolate the fundamentalists. President (and former general) Lamine Zeroual staged a constitutional referendum in November that banned political parties founded on religion and loaded the system in the government's favour. His claim of an overwhelming 85 per cent vote in favour is unbelievable. The regime has no strategy except to hang on, keep the country roads open by day and patrol the cities by night. It is a familiar formula — Vietnam springs to mind. And sooner or later it will destroy Algeria for all Algerians.

Britain no longer rules the waves

POLITICIANS in Britain talked all last week about the language of priorities, and rightly so. With the parties competing to keep public spending in check, each fresh piece of expenditure involves decisions of principle. But a new royal yacht is no one's priority and no one's principle. For £60 million you could build two hospitals, or six schools, or even get yourself a prison. You could give a useful £12,000 to each UK secondary school to buy much needed books or computers. Those are the people's priorities. That's what the public spending argument ought to be about.

Instead of which, Britons have been suddenly presented with last week's unexpected announcement. Out of the blue, £60 million will be lifted from government reserves — ie, the taxpayer — to finance the royal family in the manner to which they have become only too well accustomed. Britannia, the current royal yacht, is not a yacht in the normal sense of the word, but a small passenger liner provided for the monarch and her family at public expense. *Few other yachts have a ship's company of* 282 people, as Britannia does. Few go to sea with a 27-strong band. Few are even remotely as expensive as this one. Do not be taken in by the smokescreen utilitarian arguments for the royal yacht. Business leaders and foreign potentates would be happy to meet the Queen wherever she made herself available. In the end these claims about the yacht are self-deceiving nonsense.

The royal yacht, said the Defence Secretary Michael Portillo, is "an important national asset and projects a prestigious image of Britain". No it isn't, and no it doesn't. The royal yacht is an embodiment of the anachronistic national self-delusion that we are a greater nation than we are and that we are a different nation from the one that we should now be. It is an expensive pretence that fools no one except the British. It is a £60 million vanity unit. One might think, on a day when the Foreign Secretary was visiting Gibraltar and in a year when Britain finally withdraws from Hong Kong, that this would be a good moment to end a tradition more redolent of the era of the Kaiser and the Tsar than of the democratic age. Instead, the British government announces the opposite. It decides that thoroughly modern Britain is to begin the new millennium by launching a private yacht for the sovereign. It is as though the 20th century had not existed.

Britain's political parties belatedly challenged this national absurdity. Labour initially protested that private capital should have been used, only later responding to the project's unpopularity by saying it would not be able to find the money within the next two years. The Opposition managed to appear reactive and indecisive at the same time. Politicians are making the same mistake they made when Windsor Castle burned down, wrongly imagining a surging public enthusiasm for public subsidies for the royal family. Few Britons would begrudge the Queen the necessary tools to do her job. But the argument has moved on from there. The public affection for the Queen does not extend to her family, and certainly not to the Prince of Wales, who is likely to be the principal user of the new yacht.

Dangerous attraction

ALAN CLARK'S selection as Conservative candidate for Kensington and Chelsea ought of course to be a cause for consternation. This is, after all, the principal political villain of the Arms to Iraq scandal, a man who ironically would probably have been forced to resign from political life when the Scott report was published last year. But there you go. That was last year and this is this, and the whirligig of time has brought rewards not revenge. Instead of leaving political life, Mr Clark has succeeded in re-entering it. It all goes to show the wisdom of Talleyrand; to be right or wrong is all a matter of dates.

Mr Clark's selection is, in truth, a source of many pleasures, some of which we can own up to. Apart from anything else, it is good to see a 68-year-old win a nomination. But most of all it is a triumph for the heroic inconsistency of the human species. No passage of a political life is more contradictory than Mr Clark's. Readers of his Diaries will recall that the then MP for Plymouth was anxious to stand down from politics as long ago as 1985, an impulse he eventually conquered, but only until 1992, and which he has now reversed *once more. Mr Clark's thoughts about his previous* constituency association ought to have guaranteed that he would never dare apply for a Conservative nomination again, let alone get one. "I find most of them boring, petty, malign, clumsily conspiratorial, and parochial to a degree that cannot be surpassed in any part of the United Kingdom," he wrote in the Diaries.

There will doubtless be those who will say that the selection of Mr Clark makes it difficult for the Conservative party to parade itself ever again as the party of family values. Mr Clark is in fact, if one reads the Diaries, a notably dedicated upholder of the family, in his own idiosyncratic way. But one sees what the critics mean. He has led what discreet newspapers used to describe as a colourful life and it will now be that bit harder for John Major to lead his party on a moral crusade. But who in their right mind is complaining about that?

At the end of last year the Kensington and Chelsea Conservative Association dismissed Sir Nicholas Scott amid a general feeling that he had brought the Conservative party in SW3 into disrepute. Now they have chosen the most celebrated Tory rake of the age. If only more constituency parties, both Conservative and Labour, had the temerity to do the same, then Britain would have a much more interesting political class than it does.

Britain still besotted by a tarnished dream

John Gray

ZERO TOLERANCE, workfare, negative campaigning by political parties — is it just an accident that these recent themes in British political debate are all imports from the United States? Or do they signal a deepening Americanisation of British politics and culture? Seventy years ago, Paul Valery wrote that Europe aspired to be ruled by an American commission. Not knowing how to rid itself of its history, it sought to be relieved of it by being ruled by a country that had none. Despairing of ever solving its problems, Europe longed for American happiness to be imposed upon it.

Valery's observation is strikingly untrue of Europe today. There is a growing perception that the social and economic model on which post-war European prosperity was founded is not working. It has not solved mass unemployment, and in a post-cold war world it is decliningly competitive.

Few Europeans deny this model needs fundamental reform. They know they must make their welfare policies and labour markets more *flexible. Yet no European thinks of* copying US policies. A society in which widening economic and racial inequalities have become hopelessly intertwined is not a model that any of the states of continental Europe is inclined to emulate. The Brazilianised America that free-market policies have created, in which people are not so much divided by race as segregated racially by class, is neither admired nor envied in Europe. It is feared. America today is not a source of inspiration for Europeans. It is a warning to be heeded.

Except, of course, in Britain. For the past 18 years we have been ruled by a party all of whose inspiration comes from the US. What was Thatcherism, if it was not the project of Americanising Britain? To be sure, there were always absurdities in the new right's American cult. It seemed not to occur to Thatcherites to ask why many of the signs of contemporary decadence against which they fulminated — the weakness of the family, the breakdown of law and order, political correctness — were so much more palpably extreme across the Atlantic. Nor has the Thatcherite romance with America been much reciprocated. In Washington the suggestion that Britain might some day cut loose from Europe to link up with the US evokes incredulous contempt. It is a symptom of the terminal unreality that pervades thinking on the Tory right that the delusion of a radically altered British relationship with the US seems set to resurface after the general election. When candidates for the Conservative leadership compete in flirting with the fantasy of British withdrawal from the EU we may be sure that the Tories are in for a long spell in opposition.

Americo-centrism is not a peculiar aberration of the Tory right. It spans much of the political spectrum in Britain. It is found among left liberals who imagine that the cure for British ills is a written constitution and an American culture of rights. It is expressed by some in New Labour who think that the policies and strategies of Clinton's New Democrats can be transferred to post-Thatcherite Britain. The truth is that even after nearly two decades of rule by the new right, Britain resembles other European countries more than it does the US.

British voters do not share with Americans the conviction that government is the problem and free markets the solution. When asked about human rights, 80 per cent of them rank the right to decent medical care over all civil and personal liberties. Britons do not have American attitudes to mobility. A recent survey found that British workers are about 25 times less likely to consider moving to another part of the country to earn more money or to find a job than their US counterparts. Over half of British adults live within five miles of where they were born.

Unlike the US electorate, British voters cannot be persuaded to give up on the state as an institution that has the responsibility to protect them from the worst risks. Along with every other European government, Labour in power will have the hard task of managing an inevitable collision between insistent political demands for better public services and fiscal constraints that in any near future are immovable.

It can only do so if its policies aim to couple economic success with social cohesion. In the US economic Darwinism and cultural fundamentalism go together. Productivity and dividends have been raised by treating families and communities as unprofitable overheads. Business efficiency has been promoted, but at the cost of a coherent culture. American politicians are powerless to regulate the economy. Instead they peddle a trivial or poisonous politics of family values and mass incarceration.

BRITAIN should look to Europe and beyond for policies that yoke the imperatives of the market economy to the needs of society. A Dutch experiment — that has made labour markets more flexible, paid people without work a minimum wage to help make public places safer, and produced a lower rate of unemployment than low-wage Britain without compromising basic standards of welfare provision — merits close attention. The Australian scheme enabling single parents to enter the labour market, mentioned by Tony Blair last week, is not a sop to familial fundamentalism; it is a way of bringing some of those excluded from work — one in five households today — back into the mainstream of society. In Asia, Singapore's policies for state-administered pensions that are owned as personal property show that government can have a decisive role in backing individual aspirations.

In the US, deregulated markets have been promoted at the price of desolating society. That American model has little to teach anyone about how economic efficiency and social cohesion can be made to work together. In the coming century the European project will be to construct a dynamic market economy that is friendly to vital human needs. Britain should decouple itself from America's failing political culture and join its partners in shaping that European future.

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Le Monde

Why Algeria's reign of terror has returned

COMMENT
Jean-Pierre Tuquoi

THE start of Ramadan has coincided with an escalation in the violence that has been raging in Algeria over the past five years. What strategy is motivating attacks attributed to militant Islamists which have already claimed at least 150 lives?

Certainly a tactical coherence can be discerned behind these crimes. The slaughter of at least 26 people in a village on the vast Mitidja plain stretching south of the capital *Algiers was an indirect response to* the armed militias that the authorities are setting up in villages. And the car bombs are probably the Islamist response to the Western investors who are beginning to return to Algeria.

Since independence, the army has been the pre-eminent force in Algeria rather than the FLN (National Liberation Front), or the country's chief labour union, the UGTA (General Union of Algerian Workers). It is the backbone of a nation where cultural and political divides run deep.

Whoever commands the army controls the country. The dismissal of Ahmed Ben Bella, the first president of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, by his defence minister, Colonel Houari Boumediène, was no accident. After taking power Boumediène took the precaution of keeping the defence portfolio for himself. President Chadli Benjedid failed to follow the example and was duly ousted from office in January 1992 by the military under the command of the defence minister, General Khaled Nezzar. The current president, General Liamine Zéroual, has taken these lessons to heart: he is both president and defence minister.

It is a mistake to imagine that the dozen or so generals who helped Zéroual to power on the understanding that he would operate on the principle of *primus inter pares* are united. They are split between two tendencies — those who urge "crushing" the Islamists and those who advocate a "dialogue" with them. But on one point at least the generals, who are the country's real masters, are agreed: the Islamists must not be allowed to join the regular army of 122,000 troops (including 90,000 conscripts). Ensuring the army's integrity is, therefore, all-important.

However, in 1993 and 1994 Islamic fundamentalists were busy at work among soldiers and went some way towards destabilising the military. Over and above the desertions, the one episode that really shook the army was the March 22, 1993, assault on the Boughezoul garrison, some 100km south of Algiers. Aided by members of the garrison itself, including NCOs, an Islamist commando unit seized a substantial quantity of weapons and left some 40 soldiers dead.

The lesson has been well learnt. The army now takes part in "crushing" Islamists, but from a distance, almost as spectators. Its planes carry out napalm bomb strikes against the Islamist guerrillas' mountain hideouts. Artillery is also deployed, but conscripts are rarely sent into operations on the ground. All the "dirty work", so to speak, is farmed out to the 24,000-strong gendarmerie and the militias of well-armed — and well-paid — villagers. Some observers see the struggle against the Islamists as having been "privatised".

With the encouragement of the authorities, thousands of people are joining the militias, either out of conviction or out of sheer opportunism. The Islamist rebels have responded to the militarisation of civilians with summary executions and horrific slaughters. The object is clear — to dissuade, by every possible means, villages thinking of setting up their own armed units and to punish the families of militia members.

Up to November 1996, when the constitutional referendum took place, the violence appeared to have subsided. Both the capital and the main provincial urban centres had escaped relatively unscathed.

Accepting the reassurances of the Algerian authorities, Western business has returned to the country. Embassies that shut for security reasons — Spain, Netherlands, Austria — have reopened. And countries that had suspended diplomatic relations with Algiers — Britain, Italy, Switzerland, Germany — have reopened dialogue.

Official delegations have been visiting Algiers. Work has resumed on several major public projects — such as the construction of a big hydraulic dam north of Constantine by a Spanish firm. Foreign banks are again beginning to give credit lines for financing operations, most of them in the natural gas and petroleum sector.

In short, the country is showing signs of returning to normal. It is to prevent this from happening that the murderous fury that epitomises Algeria's fratricidal confrontation is raging once again.

(January 23)

Hired guns menace Brazil's landless peasants

Jean-Jacques Sévilla
in Rio de Janeiro

SINCE early January clashes between *fazendeiros* (big ranchers) and *posseiros* (poor tenant farmers) have escalated and the violence is spreading to the different regions of Brazil.

At Rio Bonito de Iguâ in the south, two activists of the Movement of the Landless (MST) were killed in an ambush on January 16. Only the day before, acting in accordance with the National Agrarian Reform Plan (PNRA), President Fernando Henrique Cardoso had signed a decree expropriating the 16,700-hectare (41,265-acre) Pinhal Ralo estate, where the ambush took place. The two men killed came from two of the 800 landless families who are to be settled on the property — officially listed as "unproductive" — after it is divided up into lots.

Protesting against the assassination of its activists, the MST immediately announced plans to "step up the campaign to occupy unproductive estates", which it launched last year in all but six of Brazil's 26 states.

In *southern Pará*, an Amazon state twice the size of France, the climate of terror created by the fazendeiros is reflected in the statistics supplied by the Pastoral Commission on Land, an agency of the influential Brazilian Bishops' Conference: 31 of the 47 agrarian reform activists murdered in Brazil last year came from this region, which is still in the course of being settled and where *pistoleiros* (hired killers) lay down the law.

In a period of less than two *weeks, two ambushes have claimed* the lives of five posseiros who, in all probability, were killed while trying to squat on estates not put to any use. Meanwhile at Paragominas, 300km from the Pará state capital, Belém, a 23-year-old radio reporter, Nathan Gatinho, was cut down by a hail of bullets. The police officer in charge of the inquiry said the reporter had made "many enemies" by openly condemning in his radio reports the high-handed methods being used by the large landowners.

This series of tragic developments is now about to set off a far-ranging official reaction. According to information published in the local press and confirmed on January 20 by Land Policy Minister Raoul Jungmann, the government is getting ready to launch an operation aimed at a "general disarmament" in southern Pará. The crackdown is to be led by the federal police, with logistical support from the army.

Since the revival last December of the Rural Democratic Union (UDR), a group made up of fazendeiros which its detractors regard as a "latifundium militia", the *chances of things getting* out of hand have increased considerably. In 1994, when the land reform — cautiously launched after the collapse of the military dictatorship — appeared likely to stall, the UDR announced it was disbanding. But the gathering momentum of the MST, which was founded in 1979 in grassroots lay communities that have embraced liberation theology, has brought the revival of the UDR.

The MST's red flag, featuring a peasant brandishing a machete, *now flies throughout Brazil. The* organisation's national co-ordinator, João Pedro Stedile, says the movement has recruited more than 40,000 landless peasant families at 244 campsites, most of them located around the perimeter of ranches earmarked for expropriation.

Though the MST concedes some "progress" has been achieved in land reform since Cardoso took office two years ago — he has promised to distribute 280,000 land ownership deeds during his four years in office — it is nevertheless not relaxing its strategy of tirelessly drawing attention to the problem.

THE MST is all the more aggressive on this point as agrarian reform is a popular cause in Brazil because of the extreme concentration of land ownership today: almost half the property registered at the land office is in the hands of a mere 2 per cent of landowners.

Lent legitimacy by public opinion polls, the MST's struggle, along with that of other groups that have sprung up but are beyond its control, is now inspiring television scriptwriters. Last week an episode of the very popular TV Globo soap opera O Rei do Gada showed a pistoleiro assassinating a member of parliament, the doughty champion of landless peasants. To make the story even more realistic, Benedita da Silva, a real-life senator from the leftwing Workers' Party, briefly appeared as the hero's grief-stricken widow standing beside her husband's coffin.

(January 23)

Sweden's trail of Nazi gold

Benoit Peltier in Stockholm

"I'M ONLY an amateur," says former Swedish ambassador Sven-Fredrik Hedin. But this amateur's two-year search through the archives has just thrown a harsh light on the wartime attitude of Sweden, which, like Switzerland, remained neutral.

It was already known that the Swedes did good business with Germany during the second world war. At the risk of breaching its traditional policy of neutrality, Stockholm exported iron to Germany — and Berlin settled a large part of the bills with gold: 35 tonnes in all.

This is where the retired diplomat Hedin and Göran Elgemeyr, a journalist and historian, enter the story. They have told a public inquiry that the Swedish government of the day knew the gold piling up in the state coffers was probably seized in countries overrun by Hitler's army.

"The government was aware of it, this is clear in the memo written by the governor of the central bank at the time, Ivar Rooth," says Hedin. The memo, dated February 13, 1943, appears to have been written in reaction to an Allied warning against accepting gold stolen from Nazi victims.

In the memo, Rooth explains that he told the trade minister about the risks of continuing to accept "tainted" gold. He proposed to write to Emil Puhl, the Reichsbank's deputy governor, asking him whether he would be prepared to pay only in "clean" *gold. For a bank governor, this* was probably a legitimate concern but one patently lacking a moral dimension. The government brushed him off, saying there weren't "enough reasons to raise the matter in the proposed manner". Sweden continued to receive Nazi gold until March 1944.

Fifty years on, most Swedes have still not come round to examining their consciences over their country's behaviour during the war — as if its neutrality were sufficient to cloak the past.

"We are, in fact, in the same boat as the Swiss, but in different proportions, for here the issue is shaking the system," says Hedin.

The World Jewish Congress is looking into Sweden's case following last November's visit by its general secretary, Israel Singer. Swedish authorities told him they were ready to co-operate in tracking down Jewish property held in the country's banks. A working group of bank representatives, the foreign ministry and the Jewish community in Sweden was set up on January 14.

"For now, we're satisfied," says Jan Nilsell, president of the Jewish community. But he warns that Jewish representatives would pull out if the "openness and honesty" necessary for doing the work properly were not forthcoming.

(January 24)

Swiss fund, page 16

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
February 2 1997

Trouble brewing on the home front

Descendants of a Jewish family forced to flee the Third Reich have returned to eastern Germany to reclaim their property. **Annick Cojean** reports



WHEN Traute Herrmann and her husband moved to Teltow, a small East German town on the outskirts of Berlin, in the seventies they were allocated a council house in a far from ideal location: they found themselves living in the middle of a high-security area less than 200 metres from the border with West Berlin.

No relations, neighbours or friends could visit them without prior clearance from the police. No repair man was allowed in without a pass and a body search. "Coalmen used to dump coal on the pavement in front of our gate, and the whole family had to spend hours taking it down to the cellar," she recalls.

Everything was regarded with suspicion, even the comings and goings of children from one garden to another. Although a Communist Party member, Herrmann spent a lot of time wrangling with officialdom and the police.

But she and her family eventually grew fond of their large three-storey house and especially its garden, which became a staging post for migrating birds. "One day we counted 17 different species," she remembers with excitement.

In 1989, shortly before the reunification of Germany, the Herrmanns scraped together enough money to buy the house from the local authorities, who told them it had been built by "a fascist" in 1936 and taken over by the East German government in 1949.

The Herrmanns' son wanted to convert the loft into more rooms. He got planning permission after obtaining a certificate stating the house was not subject to any demand for restitution filed by a possible owner in West Germany. But work was postponed for lack of money and the planning permission expired. When he applied for another certificate, he was told that the heirs of a German-Jewish family that had fled Berlin shortly after Kristallnacht in 1938 had just demanded the restitution of the land on which the house was built.

"I was in a state of shock," said his mother. "I reread the letter from the authorities 50 times. I felt sick. Where had these people popped up from? Why had they appeared so suddenly? And what right had they to lay claim to a house we had bought quite legally and paid for out of a lifetime's savings?"

Herrmann was not going to give up without a fight. First, she needed to establish the facts. She discovered that Seehof, the wooded residential district the family lived in, had once been a huge farming estate belonging to one of Berlin's most powerful Jewish families, the Sabersky-Sonnenthals, before being built on in the late thirties.

She also questioned those who could remember the pre-war years — and who had been taught by 40 years of communist rule not to feel accountable for the Nazi period. She was not *alone: 550 homes had been built on the land now claimed by the Sabersky heirs.*

Since the Wall came down, countless claims have been lodged in former East Germany for the restitution of property confiscated by Nazis or communists. In nearby Potsdam alone there have been 5,000 such claims, half of them by Jewish families. But the Seehof case is easily the biggest — in area (83 hectares), in value (reportedly over $200 million), and because of the number of people involved.

While most of Seehof's inhabitants panicked at the idea of being dispossessed or evicted, some refused to accept there was a problem as they had received no demand from the Sabersky heirs. "They'd say to me: 'I have the greatest sympathy for you, Frau Herrmann, but, you see, my personal case is very different. I inherited this house legally from my parents.' The suckers! To the Saberskys, we're all usurpers."

Herrmann's adversary had a name but no face. Then in 1991 Peter Sonnenthal, a great-grandson of the Saberskys born in New York in 1954, made his first visit to Seehof. He spent a lot of time walking along its cobbled streets and stopping in front of each house. He was anxiously watched by residents.

Then he paused on the steps of the Sonnenthal Villa, which he recognised as the setting of many family photographs. He had long dreamt of Seehof and its grounds, its fruit trees and flowerbeds, which down the years, and from a great distance, had been cherished and amplified by family memories.

"If Hitler hadn't come to power, if he hadn't declared a pitiless war on the Jews, my family would not have been scattered around the world — they would still be living on their lands in Germany," he says. "But something terrible happened in this country, for which everyone must be accountable, even if they are of a different generation. All communism did was postpone the hour of reckoning."

Herrmann would have preferred not to have had to face that reckoning. "My father was a communist and spent nine and a half years in a *concentration camp. So I can claim* that my family too has suffered its share of repression. It would be really unfair if I were kicked out so as to compensate a Jewish family who — luckily for them — did not get sent to a concentration camp."

After the Teltow residents set up a defence group, the situation gradually became more tense. Embarrassed politicians and local councillors scrabbled about for a compromise solution. Sonnenthal was saddened by the hostility of some reactions he encountered and by the appearance of anti-Semitic graffiti.

Local residents dismissed the graffiti as "a silly prank by drunken teenagers" or "a provocation by a handful of Berlin extremists who have no business to be in Seehof". Sonnenthal is not so sure: "There is latent anti-Semitism here. These people only just about accept the fact that Jews were persecuted from the beginning of the Third Reich."

THE law, however, is unambiguous: it requires all Jewish property to be restored to its owners' heirs, unless it can be proved it was freely sold by the owners under normal market conditions. Local residents have been trying to prove precisely that. They claim the Saberskys organised the sale of their estate before they fled Germany.

The administrative authority in charge of restitution cases came to the same conclusion last year when it rejected the Sabersky heirs' demand "except for three plots of land, which were confiscated at a late date by the Nazis".

"That was a political and opportunistic decision — to avoid stirring up trouble," Sonnenthal says. "They're busy rewriting history." His family would never, he argues, have suddenly decided in 1938 to carve up their farming estate into 850 lots and sell them off had it not been for the pressure of political events, anti-Jewish legislation and particularly the law forbidding Jews from running a farm.

He says they would never, unless they had been forced, have called on the services of a local estate agent — a leading Nazi — to organise the advertising and sale of the lots in return for a 20 per cent commission, *which he later jacked up to 40 per* cent. Had they not been scared and desperate to sell, they would not have accepted sale prices some 20 per cent below the going rate. And they could never hope to be paid the final instalments of the sales because Jewish bank accounts and assets had been frozen.

Local residents dismiss such arguments. They claim the Saberskys wanted to bring off a long-planned lucrative property deal, as can be seen from various maps which show the layout of the lots and how they were to be connected up to gas and electricity. "It's quite clear the Sabersky heirs aren't interested in justice," says Herrmann. "They have a financial interest in the fact that our land is only half an hour from the centre of Berlin."

Since 1991 Sonnenthal has had several meetings with residents and drunk many cups of coffee at Herrmann's house. Shaken by the distress the affair has caused, he says he tried to persuade his fellow heirs to drop their demands for the restitution of land that had been built on, "so nobody would run the risk of being evicted from their home as members of our family were".

But that was too generous for the other heirs. Last summer Sonnenthal offered residents another solution: they should buy off the Saberskys' claims to for a token price of 15 deutschmarks ($9) per square metre. Some were tempted by the offer, but most reacted angrily.

In any case, as the judicial authorities have already dismissed the Sabersky case twice, it is difficult to see what further legal recourse they have. Sonnenthal says he is determined to exhaust every possibility, even if the process drags on, as could happen, for 15 or 20 years.

Time seems to have come to a halt in Seehof. No legal transactions can be carried out. Mortgages have been frozen and repair work postponed. Herrmann's neighbour got so fed up with her temperamental central heating system, cracked walls and leaking roof that she decided she would be better off renting elsewhere.

Sonnenthal understands, but nothing will induce him to give up. "Why should eastern Germany be the only part of Germany not to take *a long hard look at its own past?* No degree of distress can justify a people not facing up to their collective responsibility and their past."

(January 8)

Niger puts opposition in the dock

Thomas Sotinel in Abidjan, Ivory Coast

NIGER'S state security court, an emergency judicial body first set up in 1964 to deal with a Marxist uprising, was reinstated by President Ibrahim Baré Maïnassara on January 17. The court will try opposition leaders who, along with 60 of their supporters, were arrested after a demonstration in the capital, Niamey, on January 11.

They were demanding that the opposition should be allowed fair access to the state media. But the regime, which seized power in a coup last January, saw the demonstration as the first stage of a "process of destabilisation".

***Niger's opposition parties,* once riven by fierce disputes, unanimously reject Baré Maïnassara's legitimacy on the grounds that last year's presidential election was rigged — the Independent National Electoral Commission was dissolved in the middle of the voting, and the European Union and the United States questioned the validity of the electoral process.**

The regime has since organised a general election — boycotted by all the political parties — and restored links with France and international financial institutions.

In the days leading up to the first anniversary of the coup, the opposition was apparently tempted to try the "Serb" technique of organising daily demonstrations. The regime responded by arresting the main opposition leaders, including the former president, Mahamane Ousmane, Mamadou Tanja, and Mamadou Issoufou.

Following the judiciary's refusal to ban a demonstration on January 11, the government set up the state security court, whose members can be expected to be more sympathetic towards government policies.

France, the US, several human rights organisations and the Socialist International have all called for the release of the jailed opposition members. However, a Niamey-based foreign diplomat feels that once the anniversary of the coup has passed, the situation will become less tense.

Baré Maïnassara's coup was triggered by the institutional deadlock that resulted from a clash between the former president, Ousmane, and the parliamentary majority centred on the former single party. All the signs are that the country is bracing itself for another standoff — this time between the military regime and the entire political community.

(January 19-20)

Le Monde

Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani



GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Bombs Won't Win Debate On Abortion

OPINION
Richard Cohen

WASHINGTON had two bomb scares on Wednesday last week. The first occurred across the street from an abortion clinic and the other around the corner at the Mayflower Hotel where NARAL, the pro-choice organization, was having a lunch. In neither case was there a bomb. In both cases, though, the "scare" was justified. Wherever there is a connection to abortion, there is always the possibility of violence.

This, of course, is precisely what some anti-abortion activists intend. Clinics now have the security devices of CIA safe houses and you cannot go near one without thinking that, for just a moment, your life is in some danger. After all, it was just last month that two bombs went off outside an Atlanta clinic — the second designed to maim or kill emergency workers or journalists rushing to the blast.

The technique is hardly new. It is used in Beirut and Northern Ireland and other places where religious differences have petrified into stone-cold hate. It is preposterous to say that something similar is happening here — residents of Beirut or Belfast would double over in laughter at the comparison — but it is not too much to say that this is what some people intend.

The language of the anti-abortion movement, a piece of it anyway, is just plain ugly in its implications: To kill the killers of babies is not killing at all. It is, as Operation Rescue founder Randall Terry said one prominent abortionist deserved, an execution. He was referring to Dr. Warren Hern, the most prominent practitioner of late-term abortions.

It's particularly troubling that such extreme language is not limited to fringe figures in the anti-abortion movement. In November, an obscure — but important — conservative journal, First Things, published a symposium entitled "The End of Democracy?" It posed that question because the editors felt that the federal judiciary, particularly the Supreme Court, has usurped the democratic process and, in certain cases, rendered opinions that were in violation of God's law. First Things' editor is Richard John Neuhaus, a Catholic priest and frequent contributor to the National Review. In other words, he is no marginal figure.

The magazine compared the United States to Nazi Germany and said that since "Law, as it is presently made by the judiciary, has declared its independence from morality," it would examine the proposition that "The government . . . no longer governs by consent of the governed."

This was strong stuff — too strong for some of First Things editorial board members. Gertrude Himmelfarb, Walter Berns and Peter Berger, three prominent neo-conservative intellectuals, resigned from the editorial board while other intellectuals, such as symposium contributor Robert Bork, merely registered their strong disagreement — but not their abhorrence.

The judicial decisions that so vex these conservatives have to do with gay rights, physician-assisted suicides and — if not mostly — abortion. Of course, these are all moral as well as political issues and it is incumbent on religious leaders to speak out. As it happens, though, they are no more unanimous about abortion than is the general public. But, in poll after poll, a majority of Americans support abortion rights — although not in all circumstances.

Well, maybe the Nazi regime initially had the same level of support, so to cite polling data about a moral issue is, really, beside the point. But to invoke, as Charles Colson did in First Things, the prospect of "a showdown between church and state" is downright chilling. In this country, we work things out through the political system — including the courts — and not by religious pronouncement. Otherwise, compromise is impossible and bombs go off in Dumpsters.

Intellectuals and politicians — they are rarely one and the same — who frame the abortion debate in starkly moralistic terms have to understand that, inadvertently or not, they are providing a justification for violence. You can hear that very justification in the weaselly language of anti-abortion leaders who condemn bombings and abortions in the same breath, or in the pronouncements of politicians who call abortion mass murder. (Rep. Randy "Duke" Cunningham, R-California, inserted a newspaper column in the Congressional Record in which Susan Smith's murder of her two boys was deemed no different than abortion.)

We have been this way before — most recently in the Vietnam era. Now, as then, we find intellectuals pronouncing the government immoral and their cause not only paramount but so morally compelling that, in between the lines or in boldface, illegal acts can be justified. The argument now is religious, but the consequences are always the same: bombs go off, people die and zealots set the terms of debate.

Cuba Signs Broad Pact With Canada

Douglas Farah in Havana

DEFYING U.S. efforts to isolate the government of President Fidel Castro, Canada last week announced a 14-point agreement with Havana that pledges cooperation on human rights and seeks to shield foreign investors targeted for punishment by Washington.

In a joint statement here the two foreign ministers, Canada's Lloyd Axworthy and Cuba's Roberto Robaina, said their countries had agreed to "broadening and deepening cooperation on the issues of human rights" through joint seminars here and in Canada and "academic exchanges between officials, professionals and experts." Neither minister spelled out exactly what that would mean in practice.

The agreement also calls for unspecified cooperation in combating the Helms-Burton Act, a U.S. law aimed at punishing foreign companies that do business with Cuba. In addition, the two countries agreed to increase cooperation in combating drug trafficking and international terrorism and to broaden economic ties, and Canada pledged to provide Cuba with food and medical aid.

Despite its lack of specifics, the agreement amounts to the broadest commitment yet by a major U.S. ally to work closely with the Castro government and represents the sharpest division between Washington and Ottawa over Cuban policy.

Unlike the United States, which has maintained a trade embargo on Cuba since 1962, one year after it severed ties with the Castro government, Canada maintains normal diplomatic relations and is Cuba's largest trading partner. Canadian companies have some $500 million worth of investments in Cuba, and the Ottawa government strongly opposes Helms-Burton, as do other important U.S. allies.

At a joint news conference with Robaina last week, Axworthy blasted Helms-Burton for "undermining the fundamental principles of international law" and called it a "virus in the system" of world order.

Washington and Ottawa also differ sharply on how to approach Cuba on the subject of human rights. Foreign nations and human rights groups have long accused Cuba — a one-party Communist state where political organizing outside the party structure is not tolerated — of repeated rights abuses, and the Castro government is extremely sensitive to such criticism.

Axworthy, the highest-ranking Canadian official to visit Cuba since 1976, said Canada believes it can help bring change to Cuba "through active engagement and dialogue," clearly differentiating his position from the U.S. policy of strict isolation.

He met with Castro for a three-hour dinner and an unscheduled lunch that lasted nearly as long. He said the talks were cordial and wide-ranging, touching on human rights and economic issues, but declined to give details. He called his visit "a good beginning, a good start. It is a work in progress, but opened up all kinds of possibilities."

Thomas W. Lippman and Howard Schneider in Washington add: President Clinton offered a low-key response to the agreement, saying it is unlikely to produce results but refraining from criticizing the Canadians for making the unusual arrangement.

"My reaction is, I'm gratified that the Canadians, along with the Europeans, are now talking more to the Cubans about human rights and democratic reforms," Clinton said. But he added, "I'm skeptical, frankly, that . . . the recent discussions between the Canadians and the Cubans will lead to advances."

In Ottawa, Axworthy said he had no illusions about the pace or even the certainty of democratic change in Cuba. But he said his trip shows Canada's policy of engagement will be more successful than "holding a megaphone in a Senate committee room."

Axworthy said that follow-up missions by Canadian jurists, bankers and others, beginning as soon as this month, will continue a debate over political and civil reform in Cuba. He said Cuban officials approached Canada last spring about opening trade and political talks — a sign, Axworthy felt, that Cuba realizes it is now dependent on the international community for hard currency, technology and economic development.

Tangle of Commerce and Terrorism

EDITORIAL

MANY PEOPLE must have been surprised to learn of the Clinton administration's stealthily granted permission for U.S. investment in Sudan, despite public U.S. contentions that Sudan is a terrorist-supporting state. Those interested in the news, reported by The Washington Post last week, may have included officials in South Africa, who have just withstood a tongue-lashing from Washington for considering the sale of tank gunsights to Syria, another alleged sponsor of terrorism. American officials, you may recall, had warned South Africa that all U.S. aid would be cut off if it went through with the sale, because U.S. law required such an action — no ifs, ands or buts.

There is, of course, a world of difference between selling weaponry and developing oil fields, the economic activity that is in question in Sudan. There can be no justification for South Africa's proposed arms sale to Syria, and news of reconsideration of the matter is welcome. Yet the elasticity of the law when it comes to U.S. economic interests — and especially when those interests also happen to contribute generously to the Democratic National Committee (DNC) — will not go unnoticed in Pretoria, or anywhere else in the world. It can only undercut U.S. efforts to isolate what it considers — or says it considers — rogue states.

The facts related to Sudan remain somewhat murky. President Clinton last April signed the Antiterrorism Act, which barred Americans from engaging in any financial transactions with governments on the U.S. list of terrorism sponsors. Those listed are North Korea, Cuba, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Libya and Sudan. In August the administration exempted, for some transactions, Syria — ostensibly to encourage its participation in the Mideast peace process — and Sudan. The exemption for Sudan allowed the California-based Occidental Petroleum Corp. to open negotiations with Sudan on development of a 3.5 billion-barrel oil field. Occidental had given about $600,000 to the two political parties during the previous two years, almost evenly divided between Democrats and Republicans, including $100,000 to the DNC on March 29 last year.

There is no evidence of a connection between those donations and the exemption for Sudan. But there is also no convincing explanation as yet for why the exemption was granted. State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said that "there's less here than you might think." If investment is found "not to have an impact on any potential act of terrorism or . . . to fund any group that supports terrorism," then it is permissible. "If we were talking here about Iran or Libya," Mr. Burns added, "it would be a different scenario."

But why? As with Iran, it is Sudan's government the United States has accused, not a particular organization within the country. The United States has approved military assistance for three of Sudan's neighbors that support Sudanese rebels. It expelled a Sudanese diplomat from New York last spring after alleging his involvement in a plot to bomb U.N. headquarters. Sudan, according to the State Department itself, serves "as a refuge, nexus and training hub" for terrorists. Why then allow U.S. companies to bolster Sudan's regime?



Swiss Agree To Set Up Holocaust Fund

William Drozdiak in Berlin

THE SWISS government last week endorsed a proposal by one of the country's leading bankers to set up a Holocaust memorial fund immediately to compensate survivors of Nazi death camps and heirs of those who died there.

The decision represented a dramatic reversal by the government less than a month after the country's outgoing president, Jean-Pascal Delamuraz — in a remark he has since apologized for — said creating such a fund before all historical evidence is examined would be tantamount to "extortion" and "blackmail." The cabinet said it is now prepared to hold immediate talks with banks and insurance companies "to clarify the form and mandate of a fund" that would offer payments to Holocaust victims and heirs seeking to recover lost accounts.

The government's shift in policy followed an appeal by Rainer Gut, chairman of global banking conglomerate Credit Suisse, for urgent action to resolve the controversy over the lost accounts of Holocaust victims that has seriously damaged Switzerland's reputation.

The integrity of the banks has come under fire after the discovery last month by a night watchman that Switzerland's largest bank, Union Bank of Switzerland, was destroying documents from the Nazi era that could hold clues to the fate of the missing assets of Holocaust victims.

Swiss banks fear they will lose a valuable share of their global business if a boycott proposal by the World Jewish Congress is carried out because the country refuses to acknowledge charges that the banks engaged in financial collaboration with the Nazi regime and hoarded the wealth of Holocaust victims.

In New York a spokesman for the World Jewish Congress said the group "pledged to work with the Swiss authorities to set up an equitable mechanism and process for this fund."

Gut said the government, insurance companies and banks should contribute to a fund that would probably have to be much larger than $70 million to meet all the claims by Holocaust victims and their heirs. Swiss officials said nearly 7,000 claims have been filed seeking restoration of assets purportedly stashed in Swiss banks during the Nazi era. While it now expresses willingness to deposit money into such a fund, the Swiss government insists the size of its contribution would depend on the findings of a panel of nine Swiss and international historians who were asked in December to determine whether the country profited from its dealing with the Nazis.

Jean-Francois Bergier, a Zurich professor who heads the panel, said the first conclusions from the review of historical evidence could be published by this summer.

The World Jewish Congress claims Swiss banks possess hidden assets from Holocaust victims worth as much as $7 billion in the form of gold, art treasures and dormant bank accounts. But the banks say initial sweeps of their archives have found little more than $32 million.

Meanwhile, the head of the Israel-based Jewish Agency, which has played a leading role in exposing the banking scandal, said he has received death threats sent by mail from Switzerland.

Avraham Burg, who planned to meet this week with the Swiss international commission that is scrutinizing Switzerland's activities during the Nazi era, said the words "Dead Soon" were scrawled next to his photograph, which was crossed out with a large X. A message typed in French said: "Don't ever come to Switzerland or the area. You are a dead man! We are tired of bastards like you. Switzerland doesn't need to take lessons from people like you." It was postmarked from Lausanne, Switzerland, and was turned *over to Israeli police.*

He said the threats would not stop him from traveling to Switzerland or pursuing the Jewish Agency's campaign to learn the truth about missing accounts of Holocaust victims.

Anonymous Do-Gooder Reveals All

Jill Dutt and Laurie Goodstein in New York

A MAN who wanted to remain a nobody revealed that he has financed a secret philanthropic organization for more than a decade that has amassed assets valued at more than $3.5 billion, making it the fourth-largest charity in the United States.

The Atlantic Foundation and the Atlantic Trust, both incorporated in Bermuda, have dispensed more than $600 million in contributions to a variety of organizations seeking to improve public education, serve the elderly, empower youth and increase the effectiveness of charitable giving.

From their offices here, the two trusts handed out $140 million last year. That compares to the $295.2 million given by the Ford Foundation for the year ended September 1994; the $226.6 million from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for the year ended August 1995; and the $157.1 million given by the Pew Charitable Trusts in 1994.

The man behind it all is Charles F. Feeney, 65, a reclusive businessman who disclosed his anonymous philanthropy in a New York Times interview. Feeney made his fortune as a founding partner of Duty Free Shoppers Ltd., which sells liquor and cigarettes in airports. Feeney decided in 1984 to secretly transfer his personal ownership interest in the company — then worth $500 million — to an irrevocable Bermuda trust so he could pursue his charitable impulses. That amount has now climbed to more than $3.5 billion, the foundation says, including $1.67 billion in cash from the sale last month of Feeney's interest in the duty-free shops.

The grandson of Irish immigrants, Feeney grew up in a working-class neighborhood in Elizabeth, New Jersey. His father was an insurance underwriter, his mother a nurse. Although regularly listed as one of the world's wealthiest men Feeney has said his personal assets total less than $5 million.



Watch the birdie . . . the best-selling Tamagocchi, an electronic egg that hatches PHOTO: ATUSHI TSUKADA

Japanese Count Their Virtual Chickens

Kevin Sullivan in Tokyo

BY DAWN on Friday last week, a line of 2,000 people stretched a quarter of a mile through the Ginza shopping district. Hundreds had camped out on the sidewalk in the numbing midwinter cold. When you want a toy chicken badly enough, you will endure anything.

"It is my responsibility to nurture it and help it grow; if I do not, its face will turn vicious and it will become a gangster chicken, then it will die," homemaker Kwon Myong Mi, 33, said, explaining why she waited hours in line to pay $18 for a Tamagocchi, Japan's hottest new fad.

The Tamagocchi, or "cute little egg," is a key-chain computer game about the size and shape of an egg. The game starts when an egg on the display screen hatches and a chicken is born. The owner then uses three tiny buttons to feed, play with, clean up after and discipline it. Unlike most video games that are over in a few minutes, this one can go on for days.

With proper care, the chicken grows. If the owner forgets to feed it, it sounds a loud "peep peep peep" of complaint. If the chicken poops and the owner doesn't clean up, it peeps even louder. The owner can tickle it with the press of button, or take its temperature and give it injections of "medicine" if it seems to be ill.

Ignore the chicken, drop it on the subway, forget it at home or neglect to tickle it often enough, and it will grow sickly and mean-looking. Eventually it will die. Game over. The implication: You loser. You can't even keep a fake chicken alive.

More than 500,000 Tamagocchis have been sold since they were introduced two months ago by Bandai Co., the huge Japanese toymaker famous for its Power Rangers. They sell for upward of $500 for those lucky enough to find one.

And Tamagocchis are not just for the young. Middle-aged "salarymen" play with them on the subway. Some companies are raising Tamagocchis as a group project; meetings stop when the chicken peeps for its lunch. An actress being interviewed recently on a television talk show accidentally dropped a Tamagocchi out of her pocket; she explained with an embarrassed smile that she couldn't part with the chicken because it needed her constant care.

It would be easy to dismiss the Tamagocchi as a peculiar Japanese quirk. But American entrepreneurs and toy companies are watching closely. Remember: Other fads that started in Japan include the transistor radio, Power Rangers, Nintendo and the Sony Walkman. A Bandai spokesman said the company was starting to look at "international markets" — spell that U-S-A.

The Tamagocchi buzz is so fierce these days that when word leaked out that the Hakuhinkan Toy Park had received a shipment of 1,700 and was going to sell them last week, there was pandemonium.

"If one person has it, everyone has to have it. That's the way it is in Japan," said Nami Tanaka, 22, a dental nurse who traveled 90 minutes from her home, then camped out overnight on the sidewalk until she finally got her little blue-and-pink Tamagocchi.

Wanting It Both Ways on Land Mines

EDITORIAL

AMERICA'S LATEST official position on anti-personnel land mines is diminished by the administration's desire to have it both ways. It is prepared to stigmatize these weapons, but only up to a point that will allow it to keep some of them available for certain American military uses.

The United States is prepared to negotiate an international ban on mines, but the forum that it has now chosen — the United Nations' consensus-bound Geneva disarmament conference — promises only slow and uncertain results.

The administration's posture on mines suggests a tightly coiled moral readiness to rid the planet of unmarked "dumb" weapons that do not self-destruct, and whose special quality is that, left behind as they commonly are when the soldiers depart, they menace civilians indefinitely.

But then the Pentagon weighs in with its own insistent, and not immoral, claim to retain (and use safely) "dumb" as well as smart mines to protect the lives of American soldiers — right now in Korea, again perhaps in Iraq or wherever.

Actually, the contradiction can be resolved. On the military side change is possible. Expert military testimony attests to the existence of other weapons and other tactics to replace mines, smart and dumb, as protection for American forces.

But there is no changing the fact that dumb mines are uniquely resistant to the code that mandates a full effort to prevent weapons of war from becoming indiscriminate weapons of blood and terror against civilians.

It is late in the century to be applying this code of civilian respect. It is not too late, however. Americans, who have never had to deal with land mines on their own soil, need to ask the dozens of nations where leftover mines are still exploding today.

The best American course remains a unilateral renunciation. This would make the United States the instant leader of what a wave of international opinion has made a global cause.

The next-best course is negotiation. The Geneva approach is to wait for a consensus that draws in the laggards, especially Russia and China. The Canadian approach, in contrast, is to sign quickly a treaty banning smart as well as dumb mines and to count on international opinion to sweep the laggards aboard.

Give Geneva a trial, suggests Sen. Patrick Leahy, the Senate's leading anti-mine voice, and if it doesn't work, switch to the Canadian way. Meanwhile, it would help if the military debate got out into the open, so that people could judge better for themselves the Pentagon's pro-mine case.

Ending a One-Sided View of Violence

It's about time we stopped pretending that Israel's extremists are crazy, writes **Marda Dunsky**

WITH another bloody scenario played out in Hebron recently, it may seem comforting to know that the shooting spree of off-duty Israeli soldier Noam Friedman was the deed of a man with a history of psychiatric problems. After all, no one in his right mind would open fire in a crowded market, as did Friedman, wounding six Palestinians in his own personal bid to halt the peace process as an agreement on Israeli troop withdrawal from Hebron appeared to be drawing near.

Friedman now takes his place alongside Yigal Amir, the assassin of former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin — and also a onetime seminarian — and Baruch Goldstein, the settler who killed dozens of Palestinians praying in Hebron's Ibrahimi Mosque in 1994 with an army-issued semiautomatic weapon. These three shared the belief that any political process that aims to give away that which has been divinely given to the Jewish people should be stopped dead in its tracks.

This triumvirate, though, ought to force reconsideration of the widely held perception that Jewish terrorists commit random, individual acts, while Palestinian Arab terrorists are members of massive, well-structured and well-financed organizations. The mind-set that categorizes Noam Friedman simply as a crazed individual obscures the fact that the ingredients for terrorism — ideology, organization, funding and willingness to commit violence against civilians — are present in the ranks of Jewish and Arab extremists alike.

It also ignores the fact that the settlers, from whose ranks Friedman, Amir and Goldstein emerged, enjoy state support, both financial and moral. Indeed, the settlement policies of the Netanyahu government are provoking and sustaining a cycle of bloodshed between Israelis and Palestinians — with dangerous spillover effects throughout the region, including increased risks for Americans.

Relations between Israel and her two Arab peace partners, Egypt and Jordan, have cooled considerably since Binyamin Netanyahu's election in May last year. Syria and Israel are now trading accusations *that the other is preparing for war* — with increased troop movements and buildups by both sides in the Golan Heights as well as in south Lebanon. And it is not unlikely that Islamic fundamentalists active in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the Middle east are inspired to hit American targets by continuing evidence of unmitigated U.S. support for a hard-line, provocative Israeli government.

The perception of Israel's moral superiority is so entrenched, at least in the United States, that comparing the violent settlers with bus bombers of Hamas may seem unthinkable to some. But the history of settler violence shows that the fears of Arab Hebronites for their safety in the mosque and the marketplace are as legitimate as those of Jewish bus riders in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

In May 1990, a 21-year-old gunman named Ami Popper fired an assault rifle at a group of Palestinian workers from Gaza waiting for transport near the town of Rishon Le-Zion, southeast of Tel Aviv. The attack left seven people dead and 10 others wounded. Immediately after the incident, authorities described him as "deranged." At the time, his attorney argued that Popper was suffering from post-traumatic stress, but psychiatrists who examined Popper found him fit to stand trial, and he was sentenced to seven life terms.

Before that there was the notorious Jewish settler underground, 27 members of which were convicted in 1985 for crimes including conspiracy to blow up Jerusalem's Dome of the Rock Mosque, the placing of bombs on Arab buses and the maiming of two Palestinian mayors in the West Bank. When they received relatively light sentences — ranging from four months to 10 years — Yitzhak Shamir, then foreign minister, characterized the convicts as "excellent boys who erred" and recommended that they be pardoned.

U.S. Mideast envoy Dennis Ross did yeoman's service in helping Israeli and Palestinian negotiators close a deal on the pullout of Israeli forces from Hebron, which was complicated by linkage to the wider terms of the Oslo accords. But such an accomplishment is contradicted by an overall U.S. policy that does not seriously challenge Netanyahu on the settlement issue. Just as Yasser Arafat is obliged to rein in Palestinian extremists, Netanyahu should not be given carte blanche to allow a climate of Jewish extremism to flourish.

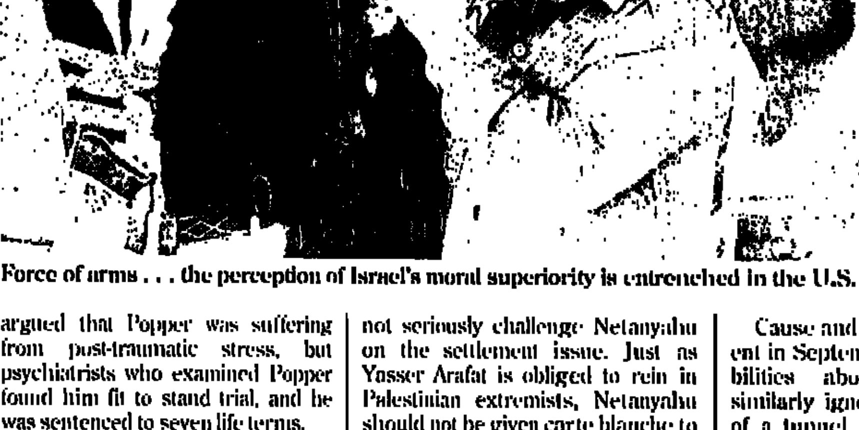
In a telling move recently, eight former high-ranking American diplomatic and policy officials including James Baker, Zbigniew Brzezinski and Cyrus Vance saw fit to send Netanyahu a letter chastising him — albeit in diplomatic language — for endangering the peace process with his policy on settlements.

Evidence of that danger is abundant. The call-and-response pattern of violence played out repeatedly by Israelis and Palestinians is often sparked by announcements of provocative policy. This was the case in December, when Palestinian gunmen attacked a West Bank settler family, killing two and wounding five a day after the Israeli government approved plans for a new Jewish housing development inside an Arab neighborhood in East Jerusalem.

Cause and effect also were apparent in September, when Arab sensibilities about Jerusalem were similarly ignored with the opening of a tunnel near the Islamic holy sites on the Temple Mount; a four-day shooting war in the West Bank ensued.

Netanyahu's pro-settler stance has even had a ripple effect from within. Late last year 200,000 striking Israeli workers protested the prime minister's announcement that he intends to raise taxes and cut social spending — this against the background of a Labor Party estimate that government subsidies to the Jewish settlements — inhabited by just 140,000 people — cost Israeli taxpayers $300 million a year.

Ultimately, the peace process may depend in part on changing our way of seeing. We should not be comforted by allowing ourselves to regard Noam Friedman et al as disturbed individuals who have gone astray. They should be seen for what they are: symptoms of a larger and much more destructive phenomenon.



Force of arms . . . the perception of Israel's moral superiority is entrenched in the U.S. PHOTO: GREG MARINOVICH

Radio Talk Show Reflects New Face of El Salvador

Douglas Farah in San Salvador

DURING the dozen devastating years when El Salvador was at war with itself, Mauricio Vargas was a top combat commander in the U.S.-backed military. Salvador Samayoa was a leader of the Marxist insurgency seeking to defeat the army.

Now, five years after a historic peace agreement that brought an end to the conflict, the two former enemies are partners in an unlikely enterprise: They co-host a highly regarded radio program aimed at showing that despite years of bloodshed costing 70,000 lives, reconciliation is possible.

On the program, which has aired every weekday morning for more than two months, the two interview cabinet ministers, former guerrilla commanders, leading bankers and politicians, many of whom were on different sides of the war.

"I never thought we would reach this stage this quickly, where people who were once enemies could sit down and talk about things," said Vargas, a retired general who helped negotiate the peace agreement signed in Chapultepec, Mexico, on January 16, 1992. "I never thought I would be with such a diverse group of people when things had been so polarized. We have learned it is better to talk to each other than ignore each other."

Samayoa, a leader of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) who represented the guerrilla group during the peace negotiations, said the program was "a natural part of the peace process, of learning to live together."

Neither man claims this process has solved the small nation's vast problems of poverty and endemic violence. But the program, with its calm question-and-answer format and civil discussion of national problems, is one of the most noticeable signs that old enemies can gain respect for each other and work together in a society that was torn apart by decades of political polarization, widespread human rights abuses and hatred.

"What we are seeing with this program is a measure of the transformation of Salvadoran society," said Jose Alfredo Dutriz, a major shareholder in the radio station and a member of a prominent conservative family.

When the program is on the air, the switchboard is jammed with calls, said program manager Narciso Castillo — a sign that people are tired of the heated partisan rhetoric of other political broadcasts.

As the country braces for congressional and municipal elections in March, reconciliation takes on particular importance. Already, the Republican Nationalist Alliance, a right-wing party known by the acronym Arena, and the former rebels of the FMLN are exchanging verbal blows that recall the harshest recriminations of the war.

Old antagonisms show through, too, when Vargas, Samayoa and others at their radio station get together for editorial board meetings.

In one recent meeting, Vargas turned to Samayoa and blamed El Salvador's continued poverty on the FMLN's wartime campaign of economic sabotage. Samayoa responded that not only the country's economic problems but its ecological ones as well were caused in part by the military's widespread bombings during the conflict. Before tempers flared, Dutriz cracked a joke, and talk returned to the news.

The peace agreement, brokered by the United Nations and strongly supported by the United States, allowed the FMLN to lay down its weapons in exchange for becoming a legal political party. It called for broad purges in the military and punishment of human-rights abusers, and it replaced the country's three often repressive police forces with a single civilian police corps.

During the war, the United States poured $4 billion into El Salvador in military and economic aid, making it one of Washington's more controversial and expensive foreign commitments during the 1980s. The leftist FMLN received smaller amounts of outside aid as well as logistical support from Communist-ruled Cuba and Nicaragua.

While there are widespread signs of hope, and few dispute the country has changed greatly since the peace pact was signed, there also is concern about the peace process's continued fragility in the face of declining international attention and rising violent crime.

Many of the remaining problems were listed in a new report by the D.C.-based research center Washington Office on Latin America, titled "Chapultepec Five Years Later: El Salvador's Political Reality and Uncertain Future."

"The central issue facing El Salvador is whether the peace process of democratization is now irreversible, or whether the winding down of international attention and financial assistance will be followed by a resurgence of authoritarian practices and the consolidation of political and economic power in the hands of traditional elites," the report said.

While acknowledging "there is much to celebrate" in the last five years, the report found "there are disturbing signs of retreat" in carrying out some aspects of the peace agreement.

Among the problems, the report found, were lagging electoral reforms, the resurgence of some elements of the far right long associated with death squads, serious problems of discipline and morale in the new police force, and a slow pace of judicial change.

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Life in The Hot Zone

David Brown

YELLOW FEVER, BLACK GODDESS: The Coevolution of People and Plagues
By Christopher Wills
Addison-Wesley. 293pp. $24

THERE'S something morbidly fascinating about plagues. They're the fatal car wrecks of history that keep us fellow travelers rubbernecking.

Who isn't interested to learn that the first great epidemic of bubonic plague, called the "Plague of Justinian" (542-600 A.D.), cut the population of Europe in half? Or that epidemic cholera has swept the world seven times since the first outbreak was recorded in Calcutta in 1817? That among the men Columbus left on Hispaniola in 1496, one-third had acquired syphilis by the time he returned two years later?

Below the lurid headlines, however, plagues are events that arise only under very special circumstances. As such, they reveal important biological principles, which Christopher Wills tries to elucidate in his book Yellow Fever, Black Goddess. Unfortunately, he only partly succeeds.

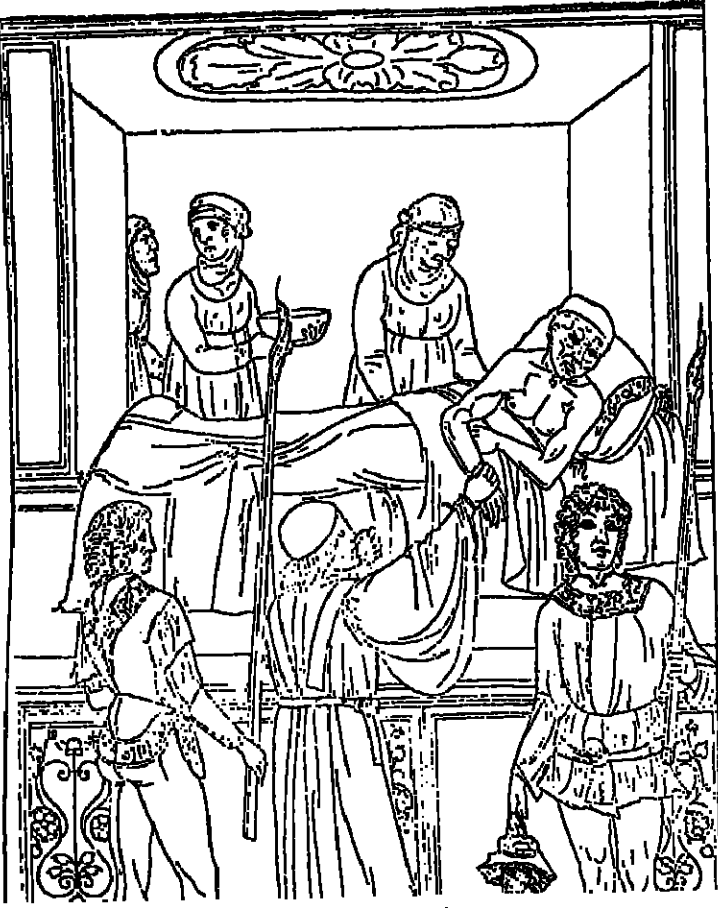
A professor of biology at the University of California at San Diego, Wills examines a half-dozen epidemic diseases that share little apart from their capacity to cause human misery. Some, such as plague, typhoid and cholera, break out fiercely, cause much death, and then disappear. Others, such as malaria, are less often fatal and (in some places, at least) are ever-present. A third group, which includes syphilis and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), behaves less predictably, in part because human behavior can alter a population's risk.

In each case, the author describes the microscopic and molecular behavior of the "pathogens," or disease-causing agents. He teaches, generally with a light and skillful hand, as much pathology and genetics as a reader needs to know.

In making his larger arguments about natural selection and host susceptibility, however, he often fails to answer obvious questions, is repetitive and raises issues far from his main argument. He concludes his chapter on plague, for example, with a discussion of whether the outbreak of fatal pneumonia in India in 1994 was that disease or possibly another one. Interesting, perhaps, but not relevant to this book.

I also think it's not too much to ask a book to live up to its title. Yellow Fever, Black Goddess is an arresting name, but yellow fever is not one of the diseases Wills examines. (Cholera, depicted as a black goddess in the Hindu pantheon, is.) The book's subtitle also suggests that the author will discuss "coevolution," namely the simultaneous play of natural selection in both human hosts and the germs that afflict them. But he gets to that topic only in the last chapter.

Most of the book is about an entirely different subject — microbial ecology. It's a look at how microorganisms evolve in order to exploit


Visit to a plague patient by Gentile Bellini

specific ecological niches in host populations whose genes actually change very little. Wills is very good at explaining how things like *Yersinia pestis*, the bacterium that causes bubonic plague, got to be such dangerous bugs.

Y. pestis is actually a crippled, highly dependent microorganism. It's lost the genes that allow its close relatives to swim, invade cells, or live freely in the soil. However, it's acquired others that give it skills useful in very particular circumstances. For example, when a flea takes a "blood meal" from a host infected with *Y. pestis*, the blood clots in the insect's gut, thanks to a protein the bacterium secretes. This deprives the insect of the fluid it is seeking. The bug then makes a second substance that partly dissolves the clot, allowing microscopic pieces of it (and the immobile bacteria it contains) to be regurgitated into the flea's mouth parts. What's the end result of these two events? Millions of thirsty fleas going from host to host seeking fluid — and delivering *Y. pestis*.

HOWEVER, when a pathogen needs such specialized conditions, it's highly vulnerable to things that disturb its universe. Plague killed more than 69,000 Londoners in 1665. In 1666, the oldest and most rat-infested part of the city burned in the Great Fire. There were only 2,000 plague deaths that year, and only 35 the next. The disease never again returned to London in epidemic proportions. Mass extermination of rodents, and literally a new landscape, broke its deadly but tenuous hold.

Wills also explains other interesting ecological relationships, such as the one between climate and virulence. In the tropics, pathogens are often able to survive outside their hosts, either in the environment (e.g., water and soil) or in "vectors," such as mosquitoes that are alive year round. These bugs don't need to keep their human hosts alive in order to keep themselves alive. Consequently, the diseases they cause are often intense and deadly.

Cold regions, however, are another matter. There pathogens must evolve strategies to hide out in warm places — namely, their hosts — for prolonged periods. This general rule is the reason why the tropical strains of *Salmonella typhi*, which causes typhoid, tend to cause severe illness but almost never cause chronic infection. Strains that circulate in temperate zones, however, often can infect people for years. Witness the infamous New York cook, "Typhoid Mary," who spread the disease to dozens of people before being essentially incarcerated by public health authorities early this century.

Ultimately, Wills does get to the tantalizing subject of his book's subtitle. He asks the question: How have we evolved to survive in a world full of diseases? He looks for an answer in the "major histocompatibility complex" (MHC), an immensely diverse set of genes carried by human beings and other animals. The MHC helps determine a person's immune function. The specific genes a person gets in his MHC set may even provide above-average resistance against a handful of diseases. However, there are too many diseases around for each person to carry resistance to each one as part of his genetic endowment.

This is where the diversity of the MHC comes in. Wills argues that diversity in those genes is favored by evolution because it creates something akin to "herd immunity." The latter is the observation that not every animal in a herd need be vaccinated against a disease in order to be at very low risk of getting it. Instead, what's necessary is that a sufficient number of animals be vaccinated so that a pathogen's chance of encountering a susceptible individual is very low.

Wills argues that, while nobody can carry all the MHC genes, everyone benefits from the fact that so many exist. My genes may help make me resistant to a few diseases, but I'm equally benefited by your genes. That's because they make you less likely to acquire a different group of diseases and pass them to me. It's an interesting peek at how pestilence builds (biological) character, and I wish there'd been more of that in Yellow Fever, Black Goddess.

Face of the Enemy

Carleton B. Swift Jr.

VICTORY AT ANY COST: The Genius of Viet Nam's Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap
By Cecil B. Currey
Brassey's. 401pp. $25.95

CECIL B. CURREY'S biography of Senior Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap makes clear why he is one of history's great military figures. He may not have been a Saladin or an Alexander the Great or a Genghis Khan — generals who influenced their political and cultural milieus. Nor can he be called a Napoleon, much as that comparison might please Giap. He is, if a parallel must be made, more of a 20th-century David.

David dispatched Goliath with a sling and a stone. As commander of the North Vietnamese troops, by the 1970s Giap had defeated the major efforts of the United States, a nation that spends more on its military than all the countries of the world combined. Up against an expeditionary army with superior resources, Giap created an army and marshaled a force of district militia, village self-defense units and ordinary citizens who fought everywhere and nowhere, overtly and covertly, and unremittingly. Consider Giap's foot soldiers: An old woman carries a covered basket that contains arms for a hiding Viet Cong. Kids try out a little English on a passing GI, learn which way his unit is moving, and pass the information on. American soldiers could not deal with this sort of enemy; they grew frustrated and guilty when forced to fight them, and so did the American public.

Giap provided his soldiers with more political indoctrination than military training, but their fanaticism was the element that prevailed against the rather inept American expeditionary army's effort to "win the hearts and minds of the people." Giap's strategy was nothing if not elegant, making the best of extremely limited material.

Born in 1911, the sixth of eight children, to a middle-class family in An Xa hamlet in the picturesque but infertile mountains of central Vietnam, Giap liked to study, particularly the history of Vietnamese heroes, and was encouraged by his father, a Confucian scholar. His reading expanded to Marx, Engel, Ho Chi Minh and others. He ranked at the top of his class at the French Lycee in Hue, a hotbed of radicalism. Giap was expelled after two years for his extremism. His first job was writing for the People's Voice. When he joined the Communist Party, he became a lifetime target of French Security.

All this is in Currey's book, from which there is much to learn. However, his approach does raise some concerns. He paints pictures that are sometimes difficult to believe: On December 22, 1944, for example, according to Currey, Giap ceremoniously created a fighting unit that became the People's Liberation Army. It comprised 34 men equipped with two revolvers, one light machine gun, 17 rifles and 14 flintlocks, some of them last seeing service in the Russo-Japanese war of 1905. Two days later, Ho Chi Minh, seeking popular recognition for his nascent Vietminh league, ordered that ragtag army to attack two French outposts. They did so; Currey reports, overcoming and killing all the Frenchmen in them. In time the posts did fall, but not in two days. Currey's description is dubious, even in light of the impressive fact that within eight years, Giap succeeded in wearing down the French and finally defeating them at Dienbienphu.

And then this: "The American government — in October 1945 — recalled its mission from Han Noi." Not so. U.S. Gen. Gallagher and his substantial staff remained. And a permanent OSS team of three arrived from Saigon. The U.S. Mercy Mission, which was staffed by the OSS, did leave, and its chief (myself) was charged by the French government with inciting revolution and killing its citizens.

Currey offers few insights into where the power lay, what the various conflicts among the leaders were, or the Viet Cong's relations with the Soviet Union and China. As a result Giap does not come alive. I wish, for example, that Currey had pursued an investigation into the relationship between Giap and Louis Marty, the director of political affairs of the French Security Police of Indochina. The police jailed Giap in 1930. When they released him Marty went out of his way to get Giap into the University of Hanoi. I'd be willing to bet that Giap agreed to report the activities of his communist cell in exchange for the schooling. The fragment of official paper cited in Currey's text confirms that Giap was Marty's liaison with the Communist Party. On such evidence alone, a People's Court would have executed Giap. But Currey doesn't explore this. He merely observes that Marty, by helping Giap, inadvertently betrayed French colonial interests. Might Marty have been a secret anti-colonial, deserving of a Vietminh decoration for his help in educating Giap?

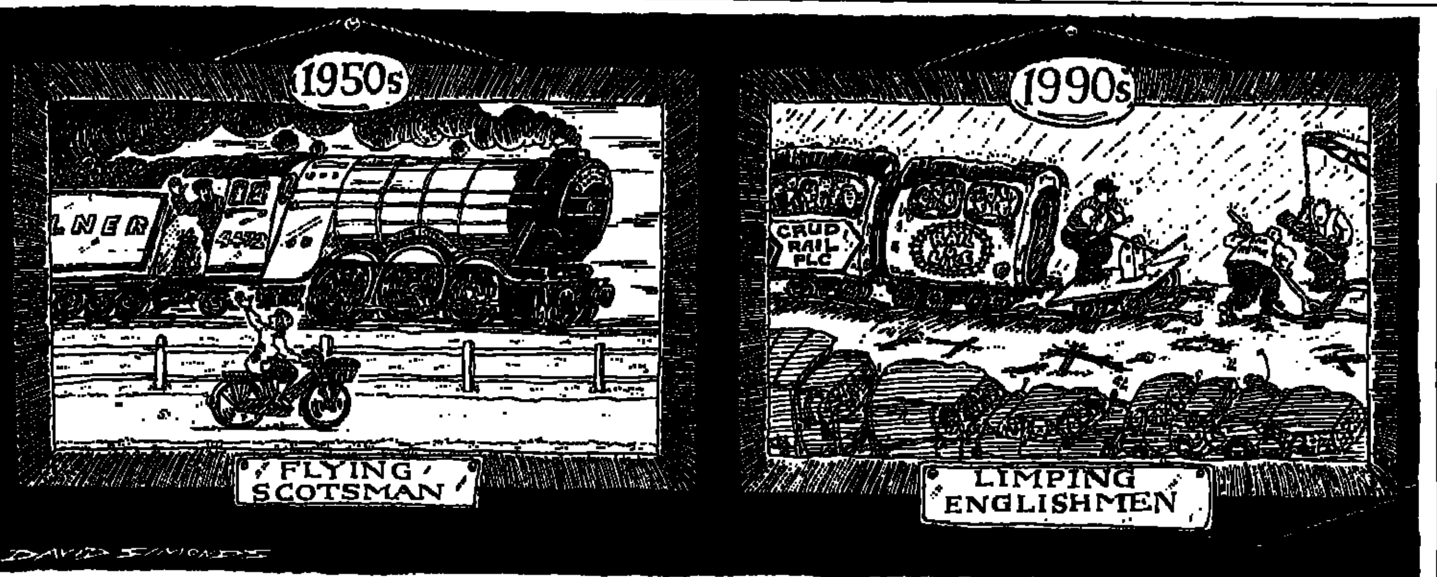

Giant-slayer: Gen Vo Nguyen Giap of Vietnam in the sixties

What Currey does contribute, if a little vaguely, is the fascinating theory that the Vietminh Communist Party, different from any other, had a truly collective leadership — no Stalins, Titos or Maos. The charismatic Uncle Ho in his threadbare clothes and gentle disposition gave it his political savoir-faire; Giap contributed his military genius; and others, lesser known, worked together to inspire the Vietnamese to tireless and extraordinary lengths.

Despite the problems, Giap's story is a compelling one. Currey is resoundingly right about this: If we want to understand Vietnam and its remarkable victory over America, we should get to know their general.

Carleton B. Swift Jr. was an OSS officer in Hanoi in September 1945

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
February 2 1997



'Big car' Britain hits political buffers

Grassroots attitudes are changing towards the motor car economy, writes **Larry Elliot**

TRANSPORT has become the focal point of grassroots political opposition in Britain. Twyford Down, Newbury and now Fairmile, near Honiton, have replaced Saltley coke depot and Orgreave as the flashpoints of a struggle between the state and its opponents.

This should come as no surprise, since transport is a barometer of Conservative Britain. All the neurosis, even psychosis, of life in the mid-1990s is encapsulated in the changing attitudes to road and rail and the rise and fall of the "big car" economy. What better sums up the past 18 years than the car ads, with their lush shots of motors swooping down empty Pennine hills, and the reality of road rage on the M25 motorway?

It would be wrong to assume that the problems associated with transport — overcrowded roads, pollution, the rundown of public provision — are all due to government failure. Some are, but politicians have largely been onlookers while deep cultural changes have shaped British patterns of travel.

Historically, each stage of industrialisation has been dominated by one form of transport. The drift from mid-century collectivism towards consumerist individualism was not just intellectual, but physical. It was symbolised by the growth of the suburb, allowing the car, finally, to fulfil its potential.

Railways were ideal when the economy was based on a number of large conurbations, but not so flexible when communities began decamping to satellite towns.

Over the decades the car became more than just a machine. It arrived as a status symbol, a sign that somebody had made it. The number of company cars has quadrupled since 1978 to more than 2 million: good news for the makers of those traffic-light air fresheners, not such a welcome development for everybody else.

Such a scenario was made for Mrs Thatcher. Rail was a bastion of trade unionism, low productivity and a statist approach to industry. Everything, in short, that Mrs Thatcher disliked. Cars, on the other hand, symbolised individualism, something she was keen to promote.

The response was to make rail more "efficient" by cutting out "waste". This, of course, meant not only higher fares, but also trains without guards, unmanned stations and run-down rolling stock. As a result, when the Government published its white paper on rail in 1992, it boasted that the productivity of the British Rail workforce was "among the highest of any European railway", about 50 per cent higher than the European average on the basis of track kilometres run per employee.

But as Philip Bagwell noted in his excellent book, The Transport Crisis In Britain: "If there is only one railway worker to every 3,463 kilometres run, is this a sign of success or an indication of an inadequate service?"

Alongside the emphasis on productivity came the thirst for deregulation, pioneered with the 1985 Transport Act, which opened up bus services outside London to the rigours of the free market. The outcome was that bus journeys outside the capital fell by a third in less than 10 years.

Thus, by the late 1980s, the pieces of the jigsaw were all in place — an increase in road transport, a government committed to individual choice and prepared to listen only to the powerful road lobbies, a fiscal structure that subsidised road travel while ignoring its external costs, a visceral loathing of any form of planning, and a public transport system that was being allowed to wither away.

But it was then, at the very apex of Thatcherism, that things started to change. Put simply, the Government was forced on to the defensive by the green lobby, which challenged the idea that the way to ease congestion on the road was to build larger and wider motorways.

Indeed, for all their lowly standing in the opinion polls, it could be argued that the environmentalists have won the battle for ideas. The landfill tax and the commitment to a 5 per cent a year increase in fuel duties are evidence of this, as is the Government's welcome — if belated — opposition to out-of-town shopping developments.

IN ITS way, this change of mood helped rather than hindered rail privatisation, the apotheosis of free-market ideology gone mad. Rail privatisation had it all: more than £1 billion ($1.62 billion) spent on the preparations for the sale, instant fortunes for the managers lucky enough to pick up franchises at bargain-basement prices, and a fragmented system that requires £2 billion of public subsidy to keep the trains running. Everything, apart from a whopping handout from the taxpayer, will be left to the market.

One of the positive spin-offs from the Government's obsession with free markets is that local communities have started to develop their own strategies. Labour-controlled York, for example, has a "road-user hierarchy", which puts pedestrians first and car users last. Forty streets in the town centre have been pedestrianised, 20 per cent of journeys are by bicycle (against 1 per cent nationally) and road casualties have fallen by 46 per cent in seven years.

This points the way to a saner transport strategy, but there will be no long-term solution without a culture change. Instead of thinking faster, further and more often, people need to think shorter, slower, less often.

Second, the emphasis should be on building the transport infrastructure from the local level upwards. The furore surrounding the delays in building the Channel tunnel rail link was understandable, but rather missed the point. Most people, even business executives, will not use the tunnel as often as their local commuter line. You can buy an awful lot of rolling-stock, upgrade a lot of signalling and build many miles of tramways and cycle paths with the £3 billion it will cost to cut the journey time to Paris by 20 minutes.

Third, the landfill tax and higher excise duties on fuel are fine as far as they go, but fall well short of the sort of radical transformation of tax and spending priorities that will be required to scale down car use and build up a decent system of public transport.

Fourth, rail needs to be taken into public ownership. Some of the reasons are minor: the Government now needs to contact every individual operator rather than tap just one source to compile its monthly inflation figures. Some are more important: the cost of new coaches is prohibitively expensive because Railtrack sets charges at a rate that guarantees a hefty return for its shareholders.

Finally, it should be recognised that planning is not a dirty word. The Netherlands has a 20-year strategy that includes specific targets — such as halving traffic growth, doubling the capacity of the rail network and a national cycling strategy. Britain could and should have one, too.

PepsiCo dumps food chains to restore fizz

David Gow and Dominic Walsh

PEPSICO has decided that it is time to act on the American catchphrase — food to go. Last week the company, maker of the world's second most popular fizzy drink, announced that it planned to dump its poorly performing restaurant business, which includes the KFC and Taco Bell chains, into a separate company. It plans to stick with its Frito-Lay snacks operations.

The new company would rank just behind McDonald's among US fast-food chains, with more than $20 billion in combined sales, and would be the biggest in terms of units, with about 29,000 restaurants.

The restaurants have repeatedly dragged down Pepsi's earnings while eating up its capital. Shedding them will allow chief executive Roger Enrico, who took over the reins last April, to concentrate on fixing Pepsi's beverage business and expanding Frito-Lay overseas.

Pepsi, despite its high-profile "blue" relaunch last year, is still losing ground to Coca-Cola in world soft drinks markets. "The company's growth rate has been depressed by the restaurants," said Anne McDermott, an analyst at Sovereign Asset Management, a unit of John Hancock Funds that holds 880,000 shares.

Shareholders have clamoured for Pepsi to sell or spin off its restaurants, which have failed to grow as rapidly as Pepsi had hoped.

In September last year, Mr Enrico, who has been with Pepsi for 25 years, said the company planned to keep its three major restaurant chains.

● McDonald's fourth-quarter earnings rose 12 per cent as its expansion offset declining sales at established outlets. The world's largest fast-food restaurant chain said net profit rose 12 per cent to $410 million from $366.8 million a year earlier.

In Brief

AIRBUS Industrie has pledged to proceed with its plans for a super-jumbo capable of carrying up to 700 passengers after US arch-rival Boeing confirmed it was shelving its own plans to stretch the 747 in favour of developing new derivatives of its latest twin-engined jets, the 777 and the 767.

BANKRUPT Japanese firms owned a total of nearly 600 billion yen ($4.86 billion) in December last year, while more businesses are set to fail in 1997 as the country's deep-seated economic problems continue.

ONE thousand jobs in London's Hatton Garden diamond quarter are under threat from moves by the South African government to "repatriate" high-value employment opportunities. Gemstone group De Beers is expected to come under pressure to shift its global selling operations back to its home country.

PRESIDENT Kim Young-sam of South Korea has ordered an investigation into a scandal arising from the collapse of Hanbo Steel Industry, which left debts estimated at $6 billion.

NEW York, honeypot for shoppers the world over, was in a frenzy after state authorities took the unprecedented step of suspending sales taxes on clothes for one week to persuade New Yorkers to stop crossing the river to New Jersey, where taxes are lower.

SAINSBURY, one of Britain's leading supermarket groups, issued a profits warning, which cut $1.62 billion from its share value and raised the prospect of a new price war as the industry leaders fight for extra sales.

BRITAIN'S Trade and Industry Secretary, Ian Lang, blocked a French attempt to take over Mid Kent Holdings, the water supplier, in a move that will discourage further consolidation within the industry.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates January 27	Sterling rates January 20
Australia	2.1040-2.1066	2.1324-2.1364
Austria	18.69-18.71	18.98-19.00
Belgium	54.77-54.84	55.61-55.71
Canada	2.1829-2.1851	2.2205-2.2227
Denmark	10.13-10.14	10.28-10.30
France	8.95-8.96	9.10-9.10
Germany	2.6573-2.6599	2.6987-2.7016
Hong Kong	12.56-12.57	12.88-12.87
Ireland	1.0134-1.0153	1.0227-1.0230
Italy	2,588-2,590	2,616-2,620
Japan	193.63-193.91	195.85-196.09
Netherlands	2.9847-2.9882	3.0324-3.0363
New Zealand	2.3539-2.3570	2.3537-2.3568
Norway	10.53-10.54	10.62-10.63
Portugal	265.46-266.76	268.46-268.7
Spain	223.68-223.87	225.20-225.48
Sweden	11.75-11.77	11.78-11.80
Switzerland	2.2951-2.2980	2.3464-2.3488
USA	1.6230-1.6240	1.6522-1.6632
ECU	1.3690-1.3713	1.3857-1.3872

FTSE100 Share Index up 18.0 at 4212.0. FTSE 250 Index up 13.0 at 4593.9. Gold down $0.50 at $354.25.

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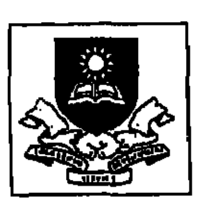
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For further details contact: The Postgraduate Secretary, The Department of International Politics, University of Wales, Penglais, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, SY23 3DA. Tel: 01970 622708 Fax: 01970 622709 e.mail: adc@aber.ac.uk. Web site: http://www.aber.ac.uk/~inpwww/

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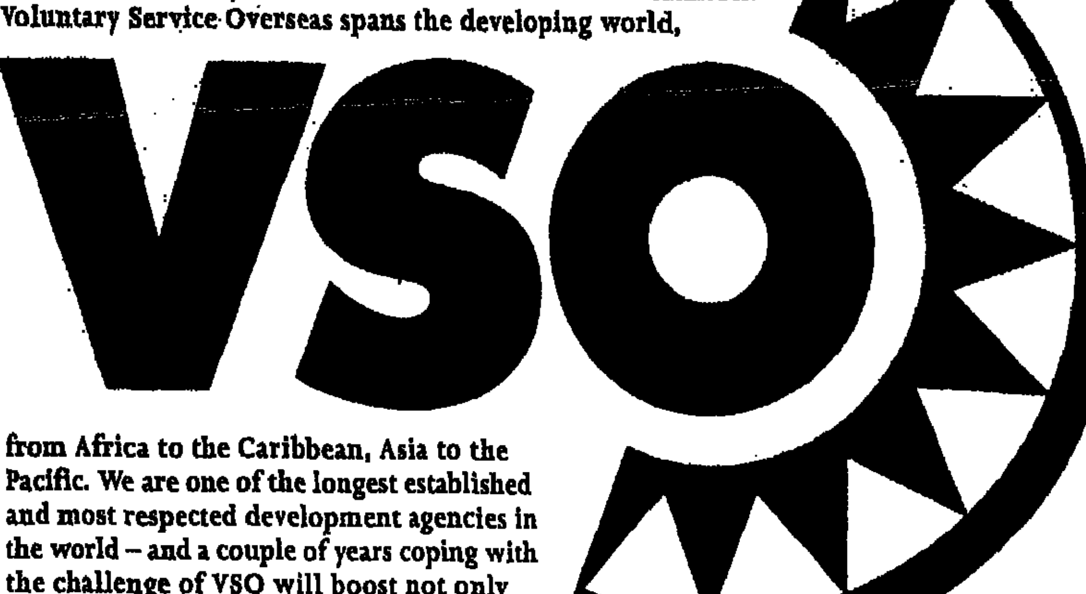
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Emergencies Coordinator for Southern and Central Africa

Based in Oxford Salary: £22,936 p.a. (UK taxable)

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Closing Date: 28 February 1997.
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WaterAid is an independent charity working with people in developing countries to improve their quality of life through lasting improvements to water, sanitation and hygiene using local skills and practical technologies.

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Are middle-class mothers powerless to resist their children's demands for fashion foods? Can poorer parents even afford to? **Anne Karpf** fears the worst

Vegetables matter

WE'VE had a national panic about the safety of food, and one about the safety of children, so it was not going to be long before they conjoined to produce a national panic about children and food. It duly arrived last week, with the publication in Britain of a new study carried out for the Cancer Research Campaign, which claimed that today's children run a greater risk of cancer because they refuse to eat vegetables.

The proposed solution was novel: since children relish the various flavourings added to crisps, why not add them to frozen vegetables to produce prawn-cocktail flavoured carrots, or roast-beef-and-mustard flavoured broccoli? It may be a brave new world, but for the food manufacturers it's also a rewarding one.

This isn't the first panic about children and food. But previous bursts of public anxiety were confined to Britain, and this is Euro-wide. There was recent alarm in France, for example, when McDonald's announced that one of its city branches was laying on a free bus service to shuttle out-of-town *lycée* schoolchildren in for *un quick Big Mac* during their lunch hour. And an Italian survey recently found that, veal aside, Italian children's food preferences are just as restricted as their British counterparts. That vaunted, fêted Mediterranean diet is, it seems, being junked.

Although the current anxiety has a broader, more symbolic dimension, contemporary kids certainly have refined the art of faddism. There's one family in which the older child will eat only bow-shaped pasta, and the younger refuses any but twirl-shapes. Hearing such tales I used to feel complacent: my children have never eaten a spoonful of commercially prepared baby food and have been fed exclusively on a wide range of fresh, home-made meals. Nutritionally, I belong with the angels. But, alas, their adventurousness with food hasn't lasted, and my seven-year-old is a new recruit to the faddist ranks. What's more, inevitably, as a result of my zeal, her unattainable object of desire is a chicken nugget.

But our children's preferences and our anxiety over them are shaped by much more than individual hopes and tastes. Although eating seems like the most personal activity, it's actually one of the most culturally determined. My daughter can name every product that her friends eat regularly: when the gap between what a child and its peers eat is too great, the child feels uncomfortable — to children conformity in food is as important as in clothes. Indeed, a study has shown that a child who prefers peas to carrots will, if seated with children who *prefer carrots, choose carrots over* peas, and after a few days will say that they actually prefer them.

Food has long been the site of power struggles between parents and children, but what has changed over the past 20 years has been the creation of a children's culinary ghetto. In traditional cultures children and adults eat the same food together, but in the West, kids have become a lucrative marketing niche, with products targeted entirely at them. Nursery food was always bland, but it was a variant of adult food; today's children occupy a cordoned-off zone of spaghetti hoops and turkey dinosaurs.

In some sense, this is fine: children use food to differentiate themselves from adults. Anthropologist Allison James has argued that sweets — their ingredients, texture and the way they're eaten (put in the mouth, taken out, put in again) — blatantly violate the culture of adult eating. Indeed, children's culture inverts the rules of adults' culture: what we prize, they trash, and vice versa — all part of the great psycho-social separation from parents *that children must engage in.*

But the might of the food companies has changed the picture; food is now entertainment. Cartoon characters, already familiar to children from toys and television, saturate their daily meals; regularly used to market convenience foods to kids, "character licensing" is a billion-dollar industry. McDonald's set a trend in the 1960s, introducing the Ronald McDonald clown to help establish the company's dominance — especially, a senior vice-president of the company admitted recently, in countries that had no hamburger tradition.


ILLUSTRATION. ANDRZEJ KRAUZE

Children's food is heavily advertised on television: one survey found that more than half of all advertisements during a week of children's television were for food and soft drinks (most laced with fat, sugar or both), eight times higher than for any other category, including toys. In another survey, 85 per cent of children had asked a parent to buy them a food they'd seen advertised on TV and, given their fabled "pester power", got it. Studies have shown that quite small children are ferociously brand loyal, with a remarkable memory for jingles.

All this is undeniable, but it's also true that many current fears are misplaced. The Cancer Research Campaign study was carried out among working-class families, and yet a Mintel survey found that poor people were much less likely to worry about nutrition than rich. This isn't because they're feckless, but because they've so much else to worry about: it's well documented now that eating healthily is dearer and isn't an option for the poor — simply providing enough food for their children is their priority. As food researcher Suzi Leather has pointed out, convenience foods may be high in fat and sugar but they're predictable and entail less wastage — "if you are poor, you cannot afford mistakes". So the children of the middle classes eat better but their parents worry more.

Whenever the subject of children and food is raised, women are in for blame. This time it's been hinted that, by acquiescing in their children's prohibitions and preferences, mothers have been morally lax: indeed, fibre and moral fibre have become closely linked in the popular imagination — as if a deficiency of the latter has caused a deficit of the former. In fact, women are subjected to competing maternal ideologies: the good mother must maintain the family harmony and its health. Increasingly, we find ourselves unable simultaneously to do both.

When anxiety sweeps across the country like a Mexican wave, we can be sure it also carries broader concerns. A panic about the unhealthiness of our children's food, with its polarised imagery (pure children, impure food) expresses potent, if conflicting, fears about our world and the adulteration of our future. After air and water, food is the most important thing we ingest: our current anxiety speaks of the penetration of agribusiness into the heart of our children, polluting their very marrow with the Big C.

For more than a decade, health education campaigns have plied us with information about a healthy diet and, with the stamp of Thatcherism, urged us to exercise individual choice to become healthier; now our children are using that same touted choice to eat unhealthily. Middle-class families, eating organic to counter a sense of powerlessness in the face of an omnipotent food industry, finding themselves powerless in the face of children subsisting solely on Coco Pops and Hula Hoops. So the current panic also evokes images of children bloated not just with fat but also with power, an army of uncontainable kids.

The Mob is under fire. Its leaders are being arrested in the US and back in Italy. But there are other younger and meaner gangs on the streets. Should the cops be celebrating — or worried? **Richard Thomas** in Washington, **John Hooper** in Rome, and **David Hearst** in Moscow report

Godfathers start to feel the heat

FOR "Little Nick" Corozzo, the end of year celebrations were decidedly muted. It was not just that he was arrested in the week running up to Christmas; it was also the manner in which the swoop was conducted. Gloating FBI officers, depriving him of even the dignity of being picked up in a smart Armani suit, nabbed him as he waded out of the Florida ocean wearing nothing but a pair of floral swimming trunks.

It was a fitting end to a monumentally bad year for the Mob. Following a series of high-profile arrests in New York, Detroit, Boston, New Orleans and Chicago, the name of Nicholas Corozzo has been added to a growing number of alleged Mafia bosses either awaiting trial or serving long prison sentences.

The authorities have charged Corozzo with 20 counts of attempted murder, loan-sharking and racketeering, claiming he was head of the powerful New York Gambino family and recent successor to John "Dapper Don" Gotti (himself sentenced to life without parole in June 1992). Alongside Corozzo eight of his "soldiers" have also been charged with racketeering, while another big name in Gambino circles, Joseph Watts, a reputed long-serving hitman for the family, is also facing trial for murder.

If it's looking bad for the Gambinos, the rival crime family, the Genovese, can be feeling little chirpier. Last August, a federal judge in Brooklyn ordered that Vincent "The Chin" Gigante, alleged to be the head of the family, who has evaded capture for years by feigning madness and walking the streets in his pyjamas, was physically and mentally competent to stand trial. Two months earlier, 19 suspected Genovese members — including three men alleged to be Gigante's under-boss, street boss and *consigliere* respectively — had been arrested in Westchester county.

And to cap it all, last March the Feds in Detroit claimed their greatest prize: Jack Tocco, allegedly the longest-serving Mafia boss of all time who is reputed to have taken over the city's Mob in 1979. With him, 17 alleged Mafia élite were rounded up, prompting the local FBI to crow that it had "driven a stake through the heart of Cosa Nostra".

"It's been a great year," a senior American anti-Mafia agent says. "Not only in terms of quantity, with plenty of arrests, but also in terms of quality — we are getting bosses and under-bosses, not just runners and bookmakers." What this roll-call of indictments amounts to is the systematic decimation of the top layer of organised crime in America. Forty-two bosses have been convicted in the past three years alone. There are so many now in custody that Mob cultural clubs, funded by former dons, are reported to have sprung up within prisons as an institutional extension of the clubhouses where mobsters hang out on the outside. The clubs provide a way of passing the long hours; which is just as well, as many of the apprehended will end their lives behind bars.

A similarly grim story, from the Mafia's point of view, is to be told in the homeland of Cosa Nostra — Sicily. On New Year's Eve, 38 mobsters were sentenced by a Sicilian court to a total of 328 years in jail. The trial was the culmination of a legal process set in motion more than a decade ago by the crusading anti-Mafia judges, Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino, and represents a posthumous last laugh for them — they were both blown up by the Mafia within a month of each other in Sicily in 1992.

Such is the impact of the new drive to eradicate Cosa Nostra that a note of triumphalism has entered the voices of the authorities in both Italy and the US. Some agents are now to be heard openly speculating about the previously unthinkable: has the war against the Mob been won? Is the Mafia as washed-up as Corozzo was on that Florida beach? To appreciate fully the scale of the Mafia's rout you have to switch focus to the small island of Pianosa, off the coast of Tuscany, where another prominent mobster, Salvatore Biondo, was being held last month in a maximum security prison. Shortly before 5am on December 16 a guard peered into Biondo's cell, as he had done every 15 minutes since the start of his shift; what the guard saw then had him bellowing for assistance.

Biondo, a member of the San Lorenzo clan of the Sicilian Mafia, was dangling from the bars of his window by a makeshift noose fashioned from his bedding. He was dead by the time the guards cut him down. He was the second mafioso to kill himself in less than a month, and the sixth in three years. Such behaviour within the Mafia is just not done. "Men of honour" do not take their own lives — the very idea is perceived as a sign of weakness and enshrined as a taboo in their code of behaviour. In the way of these things, anyone who hinted at suicidal tendencies would be murdered by their Mafia jailmates before they could get close to doing the job for themselves: a weak man is a vulnerable man, and a vulnerable man might talk.

Suicides are just one indication that the Mafia is losing its edge, as the fear and respect that they once commanded and which divided the "men of honour" from common criminals are gradually whittled away. Members can no longer rely on corruptible Italian politicians and judges to escape justice.

In Catania, for example, a single public works project to build an exhibition centre cost $100 million of taxpayers' money. It is reckoned by prosecutors to have generated $20 million in kickbacks for the Mafia and politicians. That sort of money is not easily replaced, particularly since Cosa Nostra no longer has the same pivotal role in the international heroin trade it played in the early 1980s.

And then there are the arrests. The Italian families have been torn apart as members have been identified, apprehended and sentenced to long jail terms after massive police operations.

In February 1993, Salvatore Riina, the "boss of bosses" of the dominant Mafia clan, from Corleone near Palermo, was taken into custody — as was his second in command, Leoluca Bagarella. Of even greater symbolic significance was the arrest last May of Giovanni Brusca, alleged to have ordered the murder of the 15-year-old son of an informer and disposed of the body in acid. It is an indication of how complete has been the rout of the Italian Mafia that we come full circle, for it was Brusca who is alleged to have carried out the bombing that killed Falcone in 1992.

Arms control . . . Former Mafia hitman Giovanni Brusca, escorted by police in Palermo, Sicily, last May, is alleged to have carried out the bombing that killed Judge Falcone PHOTOGRAPH: ALLESSANDRO FUCARINI

Italian police report that the Mafia has retrenched, both in terms of its geographic spread and in terms of its activities. It has crawled back into its shell, confining itself mainly to its home base, Sicily, where it relies ever more heavily upon its traditional source of income, extortion.

Followers of the Mob in America report the same tendency towards caution and retrenchment. The days of the flashy crime baron, proud to be known as such, are over. Discretion is the watch-word now.

THAT Corozzo should allegedly have been chosen to be head of the New York Mob was indicative in itself: by the standards of the good old days, when dons were prominent on the social scene, he was a relatively obscure figure. He preferred to operate out of a small office overlooking a courtyard rather than from the conventional social club HQ.

Others have adopted a different tack and are trying to repackage themselves as harmless goons — Hollywood-style caricatures without the nasty bits. John Gotti Jnr, far from following in his father's awesome footsteps, appears more regularly in the society and gossip columns than crime pages. Just when Corozzo's arrest was making headlines, Gotti Jnr was in the newspapers on the strength of having secured a box of this Christmas's must-have children's gift, Tickle-Me Elmo. Some Godfather, he. "He's a joke," a law enforcement officer in New York says.

"The pattern now is that as soon as someone is named head of a family, the FBI are knocking on their door with indictments," a US anti-Mafia agent says. "We have served notice that high profile is high risk." It all points to a dramatic loss of nerve, a haemorrhaging of confidence. And if the Mafia is sapped of courage, if it lacks the will and the ruthlessness required to instill fear in others and generate a sense of horrible mystery, then what has it got left? So is it all over?

Has Mario Puzo, author of The Godfather, got it right with the title of his new work: The Last Don? If the anti-Mafia forces allow that note of triumphalism to impair their judgment, and take their eye off the ball, they may yet come to regret it. The evidence is that the retrenchment undoubtedly taking place on both sides of the Atlantic should not be misdiagnosed as a certified death.

In Italy police believe the leadership of the Mafia has been devolved to one or two men — the names of Bernardo Provenzano and Pietro Aglieri are mentioned — who are reckoned to be opposed to further confrontation with the state. A quieter Cosa Nostra can safely be predicted for 1997, but that may not necessarily mean tamer.

"The Mafia is not finished," says Vittorio Teresi, one of Palermo's most experienced prosecutors. "It runs protection rackets in all the cities on Sicily, controls drug trafficking on the grand scale and has a grip on the labour market.

"There are towns like Agrigento where the award of public contracts is still entirely controlled by Cosa Nostra and its political and economic contacts. In Palermo, there is not a single supermarket which is not directly or indirectly controlled by its clans. The Mafia has always had an immense capacity for rehabilitation and after its traditional political godfathers fell, it soon found others."

And then there are the nascent but rapidly growing crime gangs of the old Eastern Bloc. The Russian police denies the Mafiya exists abroad, but agencies around the world seem all too aware of a growing threat. The FBI listed 26 organised crime groups comprising 200 gangs operating in 17 US cities, run mostly by Russian-speaking naturalised US citizens.

The US-based Russian Mafiya has its own John Gotti figure, Vyacheslav Ivankov, who goes by the monicker Yaponchik "the Japanese". Under him the Russian vice operations based in Little Odessa, the small emigré community on Brighton Beach in New York, expanded to a nationwide network of gangs. Yaponchik was arrested in 1995, but too late — he had already built up a turnover of billions of dollars.

The Russians are made all the more potent in their move into American and European markets by the strong backing — political and financial — they are receiving from corrupt government officials. Key Russian ministries, such as defence and agriculture, are riddled with corruption, and are used by crime gangs as sources of easy money and for help in laundering profits abroad. Lt General Ivan Sardak, head of the National Central Bureau of Interpol in Moscow, says that the Mafiya stashes up to $12 billion abroad each year.

A joint operation by the Russian police and FBI recently uncovered the illegal export by a former minister of diamonds worth $140 million. An army chief is reputed to have helped the Mafiya transport a whole butter factory out of the country. Apart from money, the other huge source of Mafiya income is drugs. Russia is now the favoured route the Colombian drug cartels use to get cocaine from Latin America to Europe. Shipments of cocaine with street values of $100 million have been intercepted in tins labelled as pork.

The result of all this new activity is felt by the Mafia in America. What was once a virtual crime monopoly for the old Italian families has become a crowded and fragmented market, in part because of the campaign by law enforcement agencies against the big boys.

As well as the growing influence of the ruthless Russian gangs, Chinese Triads and Japanese *yakuza* compete for the spoils. On the west coast of the United States, Korean gangs are active alongside Mexican organised crime collectives, which recruit from the smaller street gangs of young disaffected Latinos.

Although this means that the power of individual organisations is lessened, it makes the task of monitoring criminal activity more difficult: a multinational kaleidoscope of villains has taken the place of the former Mob simplicity. America's Mafia is no longer the meanest force on the streets. It needs time to retrench and by the time it feels strong enough to come out fighting the opposition will have become even tougher. Like in an old family business, sclerosis may be setting in. Why work so hard when your family's American dreams have come true and even been mythologised in the movies? The Godfather Part IV? Italians may not be playing the leading roles.

ILLUSTRATION: BARRY LARKING

Wings of change

Paul Evans

SOMETIMES the important changes in the world around us happen so subtly and quickly that when we're looking the other way, they slip by unnoticed. Changes in the countryside are often on a ratchet: once they change, there's no going back. So it was when I realised that the fields near where I live are now devoid of some of the wild living beings which characterised the local farmed landscape.

Where are the partridges that would crouch low in a furrow and then rocket away with a clatter of wings when approached before gliding back to earth? Where are the lapwings with their marvellous aerial dances and thrilling calls? Have they fled because of the way the management of the fields has changed? Or have they been frightened off by surrounding development, which has brought more people, more dogs and summer fires? It's only a small example of the big picture throughout lowland Britain that now amounts to an ecological crisis.

The wildlife of Britain has been dependent on the relationship between agriculture and nature for thousands of years. Changes in agriculture always mean changes for wildlife, but the changes over the past 20 years have been more profound than at any time in history. Farmland birds that were once common are disappearing as a result of changes in farming methods which increase production and destroy the natural environment. According to recent surveys, between 1969 and 1994, tree sparrows declined by 89 per cent, common partridges by 82 per cent, turtle doves by 77 per cent and skylarks by 58 per cent.

Most British butterflies, 43 species, are dependent on farming, and many, like the marsh fritillary and the brown hairstreak are now in rapid decline. Another three species have become extinct. Pollution and filling in ponds have had a devastating effect on reptiles and amphibians.

Increased ploughing, heavy pesticide and fertiliser use and other forms of agricultural change have seen off semi-natural, flower-rich meadows and pastures. In Worcestershire, for example, 64 per cent of this sort of grassland has been destroyed, which means that once common wildflowers like cowslip, ragged robin, hay rattle, sneezewort, ox-eye daisy and green-winged orchid are disappearing.

Conservation organisations negotiate in Britain and at Brussels, urging that many of the subsidies British farmers receive from Europe for food production should be replaced by new forms of subsidy to act as incentives for conservation.

Critics of subsidies do not believe this would be sufficient to solve the wildlife problem, even if it could be implemented. They believe local authority planning regulations should be extended so that farmers would have to seek permission before destroying hedges, ponds or meadows.

On top of devastating agricultural changes, more and more farmland is being buried under concrete. Recent figures published by the Council for the Protection of Rural England show that even the government department responsible for protecting farmland has failed to safeguard even our most valuable agricultural land from irreversible development. Between 1988 and 1995 the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food failed to object to planning applications involving development of an area more than 10 times the size of Bristol.

Despite a deep affinity for wildlife and the countryside, conservation has failed. There seems very little appetite for a wider public debate about land rights and ownership. There is little political weight behind reforms which would inconvenience modern agribusiness and development. Britain's vanishing wildlife deserves a more creative and radical response.

Chess Leonard Barden

KEITH ARKELL, the Derby grandmaster, has won the Leigh Interests £3,000 Grand Prix for the best overall results in UK congresses during 1996. Arkell travelled thousands of miles, finishing first or second in 14 congresses before the runner-up Mark Hebden faltered in the final event at Islington, north London.

What happened then supports the theory that achieving a long-held ambition such as a championship or a master title often leads to a slump in form. Chess players are goal-oriented people who can raise their game for a while when a suitable target is in sight. The converse is that second place or a near-miss, particularly if you feel unlucky, can be a fine stimulus. At Hastings the week after the Grand Prix circuit, Hebden had the best result of his life, sharing first prize in the Premier; Arkell was an also-ran in the Challengers.

The US and other countries also run a Grand Prix, but Britain's version, which has run since 1974 and awards £8,000 annually, uniquely has separate events for women, juniors, amateurs, and deaf or blind players. All are sponsored by Leigh Interests, the Walsall-based waste processor firm which has former British Chess Federation president David Anderton as a director.

It's the Amateur Prix which interests most players, since some 15,000 take part every year via grading-limited tournaments. Winners are getting wiser; this time more than a dozen beat the 40/50 total which can only be achieved by scoring 4/5 or 5/6 in several congress Majors or Minors.

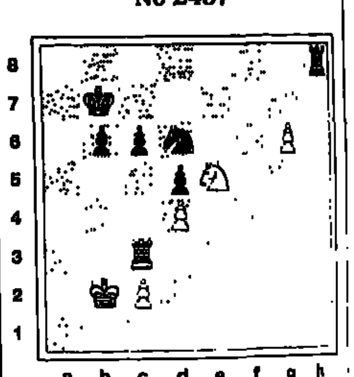
To compete, ask the BCF (01424 442500) for its quarterly calendar of coming events, collect entry forms from congress bookstalls, and look for suitable Leigh circuit tournaments; for instance, if your BCF grade is 119, concentrate on under-120 or 125 Minors. It helps greatly if you can score a maximum 5/5 or 6/6 somewhere, for many amateurs who lead with a round to go settle for an easy last round half point.

This week's game helped Arkell to one of several 100 per cent scores (C Gorka v K Arkell, Warwicks Open).

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 **4 f3 c5 5 d5 d6 6 e4 exd5 7 cxd5 Nh5 8 Bb5+?** This exchange helps Black. Instead 8 Be3 prepares to refute Qh4+ by 9 g3 Nxg3? 10 Bf2. **Bd7 9 Bxd7+ Nbxd7 10 Ne2 Qh4+! 11 g3 Qh3** Now Black threatens Qg2.

12 Kf2 c4 13 Qa4 Bc5+ 14 **Be3 Bxe3+ 15 Kxe3 f5** 16 **Nd4?** White's king is shaky, but he should try 16 exf5, f4+! 17 **gxf4 0-0 18 Ne6 Ne5! 19 Raf1** If 19 fxe5 Rxf3+ 20 Kd2 Qg2+ 21 Ne2 Rd3+ wins. **Nxf4! 20 Nxf8** If 20 Nxf4 Qh6. **Rxf8 21 Qd1 Ng2+ 22 Kd4 Rxf3 23 Resigns.** 23 Rxf3 Nxf3+ 24 Kxc4 Ne3+ wins the Q.

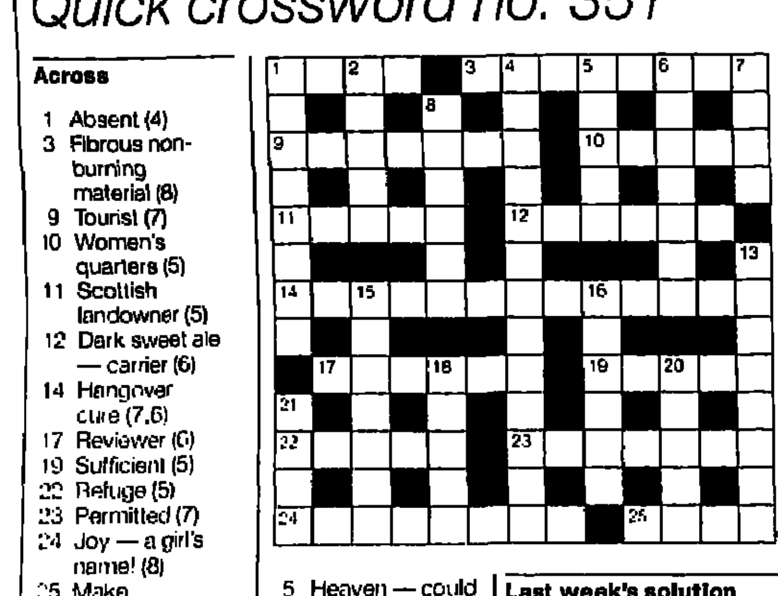
No 2457



Hugh Alexander v Alexander Alekhine, Margate 1938. Only four UK players this century have beaten a reigning world champion (Penrose v Tal 1960, Miles v Karpov 1980 and 1983, Short v Kasparov 1987 and 1993, Adams v Karpov 1994), and today's puzzle is one of the near-misses. Instead of Alexander's 1 Rg3? White has a winning line nine moves deep, though Black's play is virtually forced. Reckon yourself a strong player if you crack it in half an hour.

No 2456: 1 Kc1 f5 2 R7d7 Bxf4+ 3 R7d2 mate.

Quick crossword no. 351



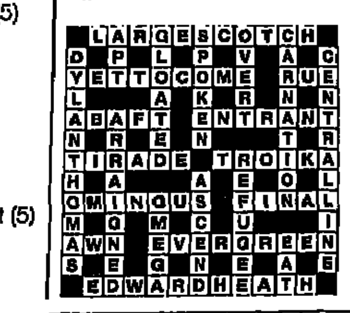
Across

1 Absent (4)
3 Fibrous non-burning material (8)
9 Tourist (7)
10 Women's quarters (5)
11 Scottish landowner (5)
12 Dark sweet ale — carrier (6)
14 Hangover cure (7,6)
17 Reviewer (6)
19 Sufficient (5)
22 Refuge (5)
23 Permitted (7)
24 Joy — a girl's name! (8)
25 Make entreaty (4)

Down

1 Deerlike ruminant (8)
2 "I was elsewhere" defence (5)
4 Collector of discarded items (5,8)
5 Heaven — could put you out! (5)
6 Torture (7)
7 Identical (4)
8 Common arachnid (6)
13 Amicable (8)
15 Coming (7)
16 Annually (6)
18 Uniform jacket (5)
20 Strength — control (5)
21 Cook (4)

Last week's solution



Bridge Zia Mahmood

THE Macallan Pairs Championship, Britain's foremost invitation event for the world's top players, was held at the White House Hotel near Regent's Park in London on January 22-24. This year, players were allowed to use a minimum of conventional aids to bidding, so whether spectators were watching at the table or in the Vugraph theatre, they were able to follow the action and understand what everyone was doing into the bargain!

I try to play as few conventions as possible anyway, and I applaud this initiative by the Macallan to make their great tournament accessible to the many hundreds of spectators who attend. I wondered whether last year's winners, Jeff Meckstroth and Eric Rodwell of the US, would have been quite so enthusiastic with this change, since the system they use in championship play is one of the most complex and sophisticated that the game had ever seen.

But Jeff and Eric were as keen as ever to defend their title. On this deal from last year's event, they faced Tony Forrester and Andrew Robson in a crucial match during the closing stages. Game all, dealer West:

North
♠ A 6 5 2
♥ A 7 5 4 2
♦ K 8 6
♣ 10

West
♠ Q J 7 3
♥ J 9 8 6
♦ Q 9
♣ J 6 2

East
♠ 8
♥ K 10 3
♦ 10 7 5 2
♣ A K 5 4 3

South
♠ K 10 9 4
♥ Q
♦ A J 4 3
♣ Q 9 8 7

South	West	North	East
F'ster	M'roth	R'son	R'well
		1♥	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♠	D'ble(1)
Pass	3♣(2)	3♠	Pass
4♠	D'ble	Pass	Pass
Rdble(3)	Pass	Pass	Pass

(1) A takeout double, asking Meckstroth to bid a minor suit. (2) "Thank you, partner!" (3) Forrester and Robson needed a big win to have a chance of first place, and this was a golden opportunity for a major swing.

Meckstroth led the queen of diamonds, which Forrester won with the ace in the South hand. Forrester led a club towards dummy, which Meckstroth won with the jack. A second diamond went to declarer's jack.

Now Forrester ruffed a club, cashed the ace of hearts, ruffed a heart, ruffed another club and ruffed a third heart to reach this ending, requiring three more tricks with the lead in the South hand:

North
♠ A 6
♥ 7 5
♦ K
♣

West
♠ Q J 7 3
♥ J
♦
♣

East
♠ 8
♥
♦ 10 7
♣ A K

South
♠ K 10
♥
♦ 4 3
♣ Q

When Forrester led the queen of clubs, Meckstroth could do nothing. If he did not ruff, Forrester would make dummy's six of spades as well as the ace and king. If Meckstroth ruffed the queen of clubs, Forrester would overruff with dummy's ace and ruff a heart with the ten of spades for the crucial tenth trick.

The black boy as high-society toy in 18th century England is depicted in a contemporary engraving, after Hogarth. Below, Ignatius Sancho in a portrait Thomas Gainsborough

Slave boy who wowed literary London

Roger Tredre

HE WAS the black Dr Johnson — a best-selling writer and a composer of note. But 200 years on almost no one has heard of him and his works are unread.

But now a campaign is under way to restore the reputation of Ignatius Sancho, an 18th century author who was born a slave but was feted in London's literary circles by the time that he died.

Reyahn King, curator of an exhibition about Sancho that opened at the National Portrait Gallery in London last week, said: "Academics have been aware of his achievements for some time but there is a need to get him into the public eye."

Sancho has been overshadowed, say historians, by the achievements of Olaudah Equiano, the black writer and campaigner who helped to bring about the abolition of slavery in 1807. But Sancho is now considered much the finer writer. Modern authors who admire his work include Salman Rushdie and Caryl Phillips. Sancho has been compared to Dr Johnson for his wit and breadth of learning, and also his great physical girth (an attribute skilfully underplayed in a portrait by Thomas Gainsborough on show at the Portrait Gallery).

His chief weapon was humour, which he used to lampoon stereotypes of the black intellect: "From Othello to Sancho the big — we are either foolish — or mulish — all without a single exception." In one letter, he bade a correspondent "the prayers — not of a raving mad Whig, nor fawning deceitful Tory — but of a coal-black, jolly African".

Sancho was a member of a small but well-connected black élite, which included Julius Soubise, a dandy, and George Bridgetower, a violinist who befriended Beethoven.

A new edition of Sancho's letters to his friend Laurence Sterne, the author of Tristram Shandy, is to be published next year by Penguin. His writing shows a heavy Sterne influence, with dashes as the chief form of punctuation.

When Sancho's collected letters were published in 1782, two years after his death, they created a literary sensation. The first edition sold out in six months and was reprinted five times.

Born on a slave ship and taken to London as an orphaned two-year-old, Sancho made his name under the patronage of John, the second Duke of Montagu, but squandered a legacy left to him in the 1750s on women and gambling. He later set up in business as a grocer.

His writing displays a sophisticated, ironic appreciation of his situation as an outsider in British culture, revealing a curiously modern sensibility. Sukhdev Sandhu, a contributor to Ignatius Sancho: African Man Of Letters, published to coincide with the exhibition, said: "He stands at the head of a literary tradition that encompasses the likes of Equiano, Jean Rhys, V S Naipaul and Salman Rushdie."

The exhibition is set to challenge the perception that black history in Britain began with immigration from the Caribbean this century. — *The Observer*

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

CAN anyone restore my faith by citing a few idols of the 20th century who are still above reproach?

HM QUEEN Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, whose duty to the British nation, Empire and Commonwealth has not diminished over the past 60 years; Dag Hammarskjöld and U Thant, who set the United Nations on the right path of development, even if that development was often undermined; Nelson Mandela, who has shown the value of turning a cheek to one's enemy for the sake of peace; James Stewart, Henry Fonda and Gregory Peck for the quality of their performances and for so often representing the "battler" in society. — *Frances Tsoukalidis, Leeton, NSW, Australia*

HELSINGOR (Hamlet's Elsinore); Helsingborg in Sweden; Helsinki — what's the connection?

THE common factor in Scandinavia's Helsing- names is *hals*, meaning "neck", and they refer to areas belonging to people located at the throttle point of a strait or sound. So had the Vikings had their way even more, Dover and Calais might have been called Elsinore and Helsingborg. — *Clemens Ostergaard, University of Aarhus, Denmark*

MY 1997 diary details the "Moon's phases" for each month. How might this information be useful to me?

THE PHASES of the moon are very useful to sailors. Spring tides — the ones that go up very high and down very low and the ones that flow fastest — occur round British coasts once a fortnight a day or so after full moon and new moon; neap tides — the gentler ones that don't go up so high or down so low — occur at the quarters. — *Martin Lewis, Ipswich*

SOME lunatic answers: you now know the best time to cut your grass and your nails, prune your trees, and kill your pig — all with the old moon.

Full moon is for sowing and planting your tomatoes and salads, shearing your sheep and pruning your vines. As for the new moon, if it falls on a Wednesday, so will the rain and if it also happens to be the 13th, for a month. Don't take your cows up the mountains to summer pastures on a new moon or they will behave idiotically all season. — *Jeanne Strang, Lafouillade, France*

Any answers?

WHEN were firemen's poles first introduced into fire-stations, and who invented them? — *Jan Crowther, East Yorks*

WHAT happens to the caffeine from decaffeinated coffee? — *Paul Williams, London*

HANNIBAL of Carthage crossed the Alps with his elephants. Where did he get them, and how were they trained? Carthage is in North Africa, but the African elephant today is regarded as untrainable. — *Claudia Cooper, Oman*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 44 171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ

Letter from Cyprus Jon Gorvett

In the line of fire

THE FOOTBALL stadium in Lefkosa has a line of rusting, sand-filled oildrums along the top of its southern stand; slight plants and grasses grow out of their tops, while across the pitch a row of sandbags snakes along from the director's box, over the front row seats and up to a concrete pedestal where the Greek flag flutters. And moving in the same, slow, winter breeze, not 20 metres away, is the red crescent flag of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC).

In Lefkosa, the kids, excluded from the pitch since before they were born, play with a cheap plastic football in the street. There hasn't been a match since 1974. Here too is a line of Turkish homes, still bomb-damaged and pock-marked with bullet holes; and an old church bombed by an artillery shell, its contents still splurged out into the street, a tall palm tree sprouting up out of the nave, gun slits knocked in a side wall.

The old war has left a certain smell too. A feeling of nausea in the noonday heat in the winding alleys of the front line. The horror has left a palpable presence, embedded in the walls, the dank, dark places of a ruined street, the uneasy, shifting stares of children hiding out in the rubble. And it's there too in the graveyard in Yayla where one night the inhabitants of the village systematically smashed every one of the gravestones.

But this is the street that offers the Turks the best view from the northern side of Nicosia, or Lefkosa, of the UN headquarters, the Ledra Palace hotel, which rises like a massive beached steamship from the low wrecks of houses around it. On its roof, painted sky-blue and with large UN markings all along it, a soldier lazily stands and yawns in a tacked-on observation post.

A road runs through the hotel grounds with the TRNC border post on one end and the Greek Republic post on the other. A quirk of the 1974 ceasefire left a small strip of Turkish land poking out into the Greek Cypriot half of the city. This hotel is home to the TRNC press club, the hard-hats of the Greek Cypriot guardsmen almost within reach on the other side.

We sit uncomfortably on our white plastic chairs in the club bar. The scatter of dice on wood and the alternate groans and triumphant hand slaps on the rickety tables of the backgammon players ricochet around the concrete and tile interior of the café. Metin, a reporter with a Turkish TV station, is quick to observe the irony.

"It's good for all of us, this," he gestures, taking in the border the UN, the club and the buffer zone. "The British and the West can divide and rule, the Greek and Turkish politicians can use it for their own political games and for us it is good too," he says, pointing to the reporters sitting around the bar. "We can sit here and file copy and get paid and continue to live on this beautiful island, just so long as every once in a while someone gets killed."

And the wait for a death is not usually a long one. Indeed, the time between killings has recently been getting shorter. On the wall behind us are photographs of last summer's Greek Cypriot protest, when one young man was beaten to death and another shot and killed climbing a flagpole. On the other side of the Ledra Palace hotel's grounds, the Limassol Bikers' Club now regularly demonstrates at the Greek Cypriot border post, closing it to anyone wishing to visit the North. Turkish soldiers have also been fired on, and now the Greek Cypriot government has announced plans to buy Russian SS-300 anti-aircraft missiles, causing warlike headlines in the Turkish press.

I leave the club by walking down the garden path into a small cul-de-sac of bungalows and villas. A man tends his roses in a small garden, a family welcomes visitors for lunch. All at once it is a suburban scene with old Austin Minis and Maxis parked in drives, left over from the 1970s and the all-pervasive British influence. There is a feeling of nothing less threatening than a British south-coast seaside town in winter. But above the road, back in the Ledra Palace shrubbery, someone has hung a huge banner, in English. It says: "There is no going back to the 1964-1974 period". It is the last thing one is called upon to remember before crossing into the North, the bogus state recognised by no one, owned by Turkey and the only thing most of its inhabitants are convinced is keeping them from massacre. There's no going back. I wonder which side put the banner there; it could be either.

A Country Diary

Ray Collier

STRATHNAIRN: The badger tracks left the set and went down under the moribund birch trees heading towards the house where apples put down for thrushes have been disappearing overnight. The tracks passed others on the way, those of woodcock, pheasant, fox and roe deer. When the tracks passed under a fence they were joined by those of a pine marten and the two sets ran parallel to each other as they crossed the narrow road. However, the badger suddenly seemed to have a change of mind as the tracks swung left and disappeared under a dense blackthorn thicket. The badger could have been looking for dead birds but it was more likely that the bare ground would yield some earthworms.

The pine marten tracks never deviated. They went on towards the garden and through a hole in the fence that rabbits sometimes use. The tracks explored the outside of a hutch where the cockerel and hens are kept and then wandered round the hutch with all the ducks inside. Generally, when I can track pine martens in the garden they explore every single hutch. Whether this animal was distracted or just gave up is difficult to say but after the two hutches the tracks led off down the paddock. I followed them down and they met up with the tracks of a brown hare before swinging to one side and crossing the ice on both the garden ponds. The animal then leapt on to the top of a fence-straining post and I could clearly see the tracks of all four paws as, perhaps, it used the vantage point to look around.

Fitting a round peg in a square hole

ART
Adrian Searle

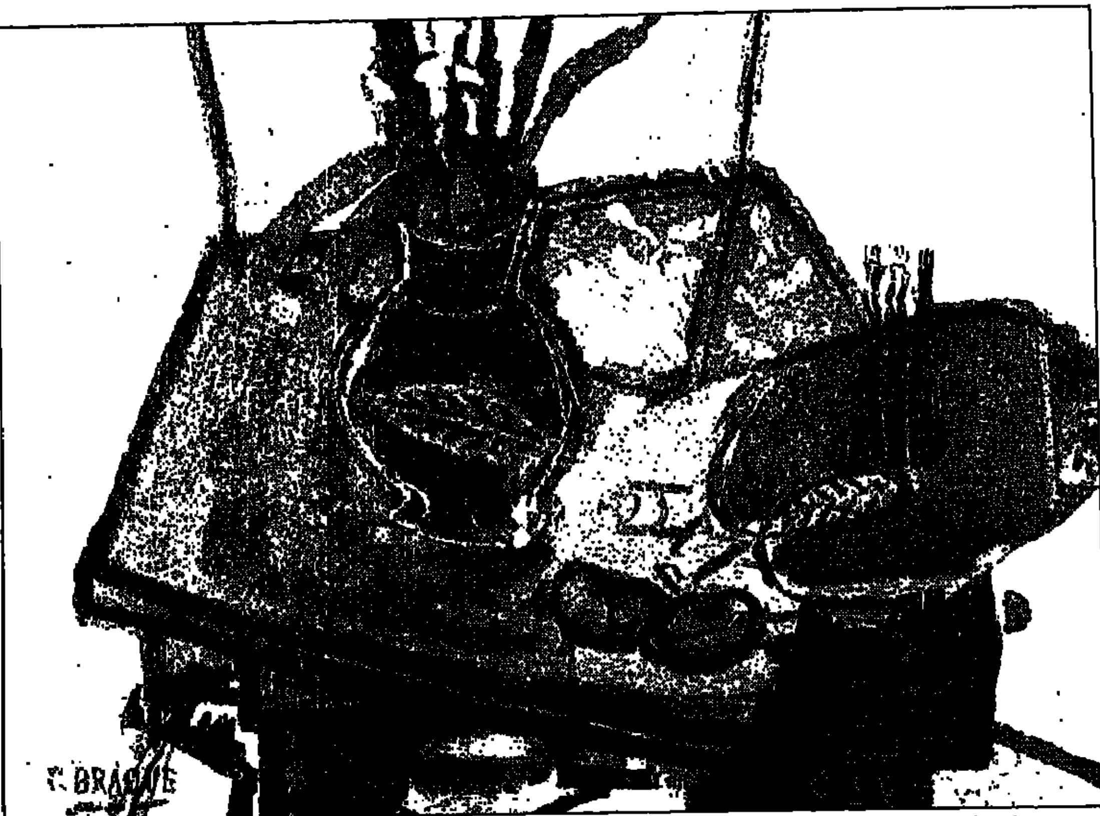
THE Royal Academy's exhibition of the late paintings of Georges Braque begins with a sausage — an instantly recognisable saucisson on a plate. You could eat it: in fact, there's a slice already cut. The painting, by way of an appetiser, is offered directly and plainly. After this, things get complicated.

Late Braque is a complicated painter. A few months younger than Picasso, Braque was born in 1882 and died in 1963. The late work of this pioneer of Cubism — the exhibition begins in 1941 and includes around 50 works produced over the following 20 years — shows both his abiding interest in Cubist space and its conflation with another, more personal approach to the visible and the not so immediate world.

His late paintings are frequently dense entanglements of painterly modelling and schematic, almost cartoonish drawing, the clogged and the cursory. His armoury included techniques learned from his apprenticeship as a decorator — wood-graining, paint-combing and staining — as well as the most lumpy, curdled, haptic, even haphazard painterliness.

In a painting of a pitcher and skull from 1943, the pitcher and parts of the background are not so much painted as modelled in thick brown gouts, like piled up clay, or even more like shit. The nearby skull, and the cross it seems to be grinning at, are thinly, almost skimpily painted in.

Braque rarely left well alone, and would repaint, retouch, add and amend works even decades after he'd apparently done with them. Man With A Guitar, for example, was begun in 1942 and Braque last laid a brush to it in 1961. He'd often roll paintings up and transport them between his Paris studio and his house in Normandy, where he would rework them. Braque, it is clear, painted for his own pleasure.



Still-Life With Palette, 1943 . . . Braque's late paintings on show at London's Royal Academy are lessons in artistic liberty and the richness of his poetic vision of the world

"Studio," the American painter Barnett Newman once said, "is sanctuary." For Braque, the studio was at once sanctuary and the subject of much of his work, from his Cubist days until the end of his life. He used the workplace as a source of imagery, and painted it as the space of the imagination. His easels and unfinished works, the painter's paraphernalia of brushes, paint tubes and palettes, the pot plants, rugs and other home comforts that brighten up the artist's surroundings, appear time and again.

Sometimes they appear as themselves, while at other moments a mandolin becomes a palette, the palette becomes an open-mouthed skull; a table loaded with everyday objects becomes a querulous personage and the studio is suddenly, inexplicably filled with stars. A strange bird flies through the room in many paintings, or perches on an easel, or struggles to be born in a morass of flecked paint. For Braque the studio was a room filled both with the familiar and with mysteries. And when he painted it, it came to resemble what seems no more or less than the inside of his own head.

Mostly, Braque was a painter of interiors, of still-lifes, the studio and the domestic interior, ordinary objects and the space around them — his paintings are lessons in artistic liberty, and in the richness of his essentially poetic vision of the world. The objects he painted — bunches of brushes, palettes, bottles, carafes, tablecloths, jugs, lemons, a mandolin, fish, a bird, billiard tables, balls and cues, scraps of printed matter, even the wallpaper-pattern — rather than being so much *stuff*, are the co-ordinates of a journey of the eye and the brush.

Braque painted the eye's passage, slipping over surfaces and around contours, faltering between one thing and another, skittering over a vase, losing itself between a table's legs, in the reflections in a carafe of water. Looking at his paintings, we trace our own journey in his world.

But where we expect, from an artist's late work, summation and even transcendence, Braque brings us up short. As much as he can be exhilarating, he risks losing himself, and us, in incoherence.

Braque was the least programmatic of painters, a painter of few ideas beyond the fact that he was a painter of things, of objects and the space between and around them.

In other late works, he returned to the landscape of Normandy, where he grew up, to wheat fields, boats on the shore, a rusted iron plough silhouetted against the light. These are uncomfortable paintings, awkward and disquieting, quite different in tenor from the monumental, often magisterial and dark paintings of the studio.

Braque once remarked that he believed he had never taken a deliberate action in his life. In his later years, he is not the same person who, in 1909, felt himself to be like a mountain climber roped to Picasso and ascending unknown peaks from base camp Cézanne. The Cubist project, in the hands of its founders, was never as dry or analytical a movement as it may sometimes appear. Rather than being stand-ins for anything else, things close to hand — the daily paper, the bottle of beer, the loaf of bread — stood for themselves, with all their inescapable presence. Braque and Picasso painted these things as though they were turning them over in the palm of the hand. Towards the end of his life Braque paints them as though he were turning them over in his dreams.

A single visit to this exhibition which runs until April 6, is not enough. There are paintings here that lodge themselves in the mind and refuse to leave. The pleasure of them is not so much in reading or deciphering their overlayed, complex, compound images, but getting lost in their surfaces, their rhythms, melting forms and solid spaces.

Braque enjoyed disrupting his viewers, of whom, first and foremost, he was the most constant. What he wanted to do, even late in life, was to surprise himself, and to confound his own expectations of what kind of a painter he thought he was.

A good case of builder's crack

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

THERE is no spectacle more agreeable, said Confucius, than observing an old friend fall from a roof top. Though a plummeting builder comes close.

Madonna Benjamin's **The Builders Are Coming** (Channel 4) was a touchingly funny piece about the lads in white vans with the off-white underpants tied to their ladders. "Off me 'ead" is their disturbing refrain. (As in "Off me 'ead, you're talking about £12,000.")

Simon said: "Everyone starts off beautifully but usually within a week or two they can't wait to see the bloody back of you. We're like psychiatrists, I suppose. We're saying intimate things like do you really want to sit on the lavatory pan there?"

Sharon and Jeremy were sitting close together on a shrouded sofa. Simon expertly supervised the removal of their window ("Give it a wiggle"). The cigarette attached to his lower lip bobbed as he spoke. "I always tell the clients, especially the ladies, 'At the moment you think the sun shines out of my arse. But at the end of it you'll be 'ating me.' It always 'appens," he added sadly.

Sometimes it gets him down. "Every year you think 'I've had enough of this game, I'll become a taxi driver.'" I can certainly see him as a taxi driver.

Gary and Andy had been building Rhona's extension for a year. Rhona was a headmistress. She spoke levelly and clearly as if trying to communicate with the lower fourth. She watched from the window. "You never get a really nice headmistress, do you?" mused Gary. "Gary!" said Rhona. He leaped. "I should like to take you into the loft and show you why I'm so angry. Shall we go up?" Gary looked like an extra required to act shamble-and-mumble.

Rhona's efficiency bounced off what she called "a thick shell which protects builders from the truth".

Her husband, Jerry, was enjoying himself. "I hesitate to use the word," said Rhona through clenched teeth, "but *childlike*. A child playing in a sandpit." Jerry tended to order another patio when she wasn't looking.

My personal favourites were Della and Jean, two fat ladies from Farnham. Having run through the southern labour force and found it wanting, they had hired a couple of lads from Leeds, offering dilapidated accommodation ("There are cobwebs everywhere!" "Spiders keep the flies out") and a hearty breakfast ("Black pudding?" "Well, I don't like it but they might"). They talked in turn. "Last night I offered to cook for them but they wanted to go down to the *local tavern* and have a *bevvy*." "I think they ended up having a kebab from that stall by the railway." "They should have stayed here and had a proper meal." "Perhaps they thought we were going to take advantage of them if they came indoors."

I should love to know the cash involved. On the back of my neck I seemed to feel the hot breath of the Inland Revenue.

I would like to strike a more elevated note. Of course I would. But, while we're bumping along the bottom here, can it possibly be true what they are saying about the Dutch? In The Honey Trap (BBC1) Col Lubimov, formerly of the KGB, was listing nations according to their taste for honey. His experience of sexual entrapment is extensive.

Prepare to feel a bit miffed.

"The British are cold and sober. They are not passionate — it's like taking a hot-water bottle to bed. But we were very successful with homosexuals. The Italians are open, very passionate — they can be easily provoked. Spaniards are easily recruited. Germans are good for recruitment. Americans are not bad either.

"But the worst, the most terrible target for recruitment, of course, are the Dutch. Then the Scandinavians, particularly the Swedes. The Danes are also rather bad. But the Dutch are *awful*."

Look, does anyone round here know a Dutchman? Intimately? How did you manage that?

Col Lubimov is an expansive man. Yards of striped stockbroker shirt barely cover his expansiveness. He talks of treachery as if it were an amusing hobby for a congenial chap.

Honey Trap was about the KGB's use of pretty, young women to compromise and blackmail foreigners in Russia. The baffling thing was that anybody could be lying.

You would like to believe Tatiana Okunevskaya, a film star, who still retains the ruins of Garboesque beauty. She said that a KGB agent ordered her to report on her affair with Tito. She refused. He insisted. She resisted. He threatened. "I said, 'If the whole family's going to be shot, go ahead!' He didn't like me at all."

Most swallows, as the KGB calls them, are more malleable. The words of an unsophisticated girl from the country, coerced into entrapping a Japanese diplomat, are haunting. "I cry without stopping because it was finished and I don't know what I do. He take me in his arms and he said, 'My poor! My poor Natasha!' That's all. I broke his career and maybe his life because he really loved me."

The most striking case is that of Marine Sgt Clayton Lonetree, a Navaho, and Violetta Seina, a swallow. The Navaho reservation in Arizona is burnt ochre and orange rock. A cactus would complain. In Moscow they are skating in the street. Only the irony of espionage could have thrown these two together.

The verdict of a US intelligence expert on their affair is harsh "Lonetree was an alcoholic, not very bright. He barely got into the Marines at all . . . She was a KGB officer throughout." It is almost certainly the truth but perhaps not the whole truth.

On the reservation Lonetree, released after nine years of a 30-year sentence, said, "I thought she was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen in my life. What we had back then was genuine. I respect her. I forgive her."

Violetta, swaying down the Moscow street, was far more elegant than anyone she passed. She said, "He was the man I was in love with and he was the best."

If all these girls were laid end to end — so to speak — you wonder what real difference it would make to the history of the world.

Wicker world

Lyn Gardner meets a director with a striking and original talent

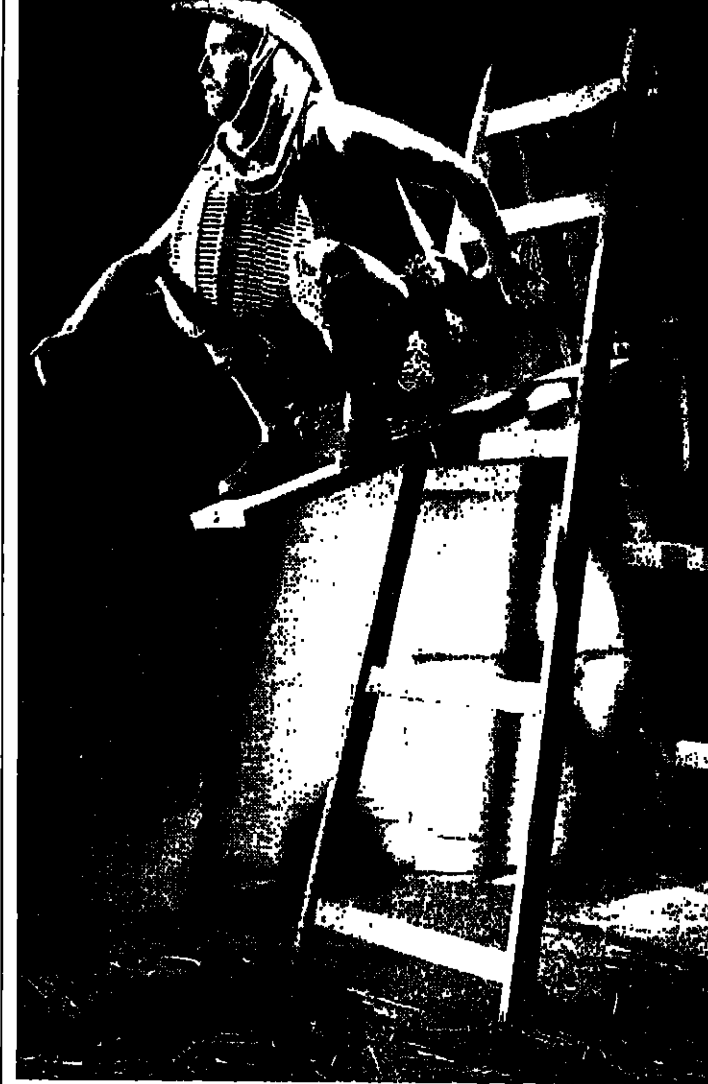
PHELIM McDERMOTT is currently in his Sellotape period. Prior to that he was big on wicker, a material used to considerable effect in his 1994 production of Don Quixote to prove that Cervantes's hero was a real basket case.

Then there was his paper phase, when he and Julia Bardsley fashioned an entire show, based on Edward Gorley's The Vinegar Works, out of the stuff. McDermott is still keen on paper. It plays a major role in Animo, the offbeat mixture of improvised storytelling and instant animation puppetry that has won him and his collaborators, Lee Simpson and Julian Crouch, a cult following. In Animo, swans metamorphose out of newspaper and Venice from cardboard.

But it is Sellotape that is McDermott's major obsession of the moment. Fifty-odd rolls are used to conjure the forest outside Athens in his touring production of A Midsummer Night's Dream for Michael Bogdanov's newly revitalised English Shakespeare Company.

In 70 Hill Lane, a piece based on McDermott's experiences at the age of 15, when his childhood home was invaded by a poltergeist, an entire house, complete with stairs, roof and windows, is created out of paper and, of course, Sellotape. It seems a particularly apt show for a theatrical innovator who has spent most of his creative life bringing inanimate objects to life. "Blue Peter meets Blue Velvet" is how one critic described the show.

Director, actor, adaptor, designer, and improviser, McDermott has been one of theatre's most unclassifiable talents since the summer of 1985, when he and Julia Bardsley, two graduates of Middlesex Poly's performing arts course, formed themselves into a company called dereck dereck productions to take their own adaptation of an Ian McEwan short story, Cupboard Man, to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.



Basket case . . . Gerry Flanagan in Phelim McDermott's Don Quixote

The exuberant theatricality evident in Gaudete, a three-and-a-half-hour adaptation of Ted Hughes's epic poem, fed into a wider revolution in British theatre. Richard Jones' bravura 1988 Old Vic production, Too Clever By Half, in which both McDermott and Bardsley appeared, was an early indicator that some in the mainstream shared the young upstart's vision that theatre was a performance and not just a literary medium.

But even at that time, McDermott was not entirely happy with dereck dereck's method of working. "Julia had a very clear vision of what she wanted to see on stage, and we became very skilful at executing it," recalls McDermott. "After a while, I realised that even before a show happened, I knew exactly what it would be like on stage. The only times I got really excited was when we made a mistake. I started looking forward to something going wrong."

This desire to live more dangerously has increasingly characterised McDermott's work since the split with Bardsley. Over the past eight years, you've never known where McDermott might pop up next: on a Saturday night at the Comedy Store; on a Tuesday night on Radio 4; orchestrating a two-hour improvised play every night for four weeks at Nottingham Playhouse; or appearing as the proboscis in a production of Gogol's The Nose.

What is clear is that McDermott, who operates at that point where the lines between direction, design and performance are a blur, thrives on collaboration with designers, actors and audiences.

"More and more of what I do is about giving the power away to others, trusting that something more interesting will happen if you give it space," says McDermott, who prefers to think of himself as a facilitator more than a director.

He also balks at the traditional rep set-up that demands that models of sets should be made before rehearsals begin and costumes designed even before the production has been cast.

"There's still such a snobbery about improvisation and its possibilities," says McDermott. "I'm trying to create textual theatre that is as alive as an improvised show." Clearly enthralled as much by process as by product, McDermott sees rehearsals as a time to encourage the cast to learn how to play and trust each other rather than to set performances in stone.

"It is, of course, completely terrifying, and our dress rehearsals are always a shambles — our shows always get very wobbly just at the point when most are being pinned down. But while it's scary for the actors, it is also empowering."

Yet against the odds, McDermott's approach does seem to work. Ruth MacKenzie at Nottingham, Jude Kelly at West Yorkshire and now Bogdanov have all been sufficiently impressed by what they've seen to take the risk on McDermott and friends.

Like the poltergeist who wrecked the house and made the teenage McDermott realise that there was a world very different from conscious reality, the elfin but manically energetic McDermott may yet turn the theatrical world upside down.

Strike a chord with Schubert

CLASSIC MUSIC
Andrew Clements

IT'S TYPICAL of Gidon Kremer's adventurousness that he should choose to build a celebration of Schubert's bicentenary this year around contemporary music. His series of six concerts, split between spring and autumn and being performed in Amsterdam, Paris and Cologne as well as London, juxtaposes specially commissioned works with Schubert's complete output for violin. Most of the concerts are chamber scale, but the opening programme brought the 35-strong Deutsche Philharmonie Bremen to the Barbican — a conductor-less band who showed off their excellent ensemble and lively characterisation in the C major Italian Overture and the Six German Dances that Anton Webern lushly orchestrated in 1931.

With Kremer as soloist, and rather minimally as director too, the orchestra accompanied three of the concertante violin works. If this project has a weakness it is, dare one suggest, that with the exception of the glorious C major Fantasy with piano, Schubert's violin pieces are sometimes overextended and musically slight. Kremer delightfully pointed the B flat Polonaise, and wittily tossed off the decorations of the D major Concert Piece, but even all his artistry and loving care could not disguise the repetitiousness of the A major Adagio and Rondo which, a couple of half decent tunes apart, has little to say.

For the commissioned pieces the composers' brief was to produce pieces with some Schubertian connection, whether musical or circumstantial. Both the premieres used familiar quotations as their starting points. Sofia Gubaidulina's Impromptu for flute, violin and strings takes motifs from the A flat piano Impromptu, particularly the downward arpeggio with which it opens, as the germs from which its structure grows.

The flute (wonderfully played by Irena Grafenauer) dwells upon the arpeggio, the violin weaves microtonally around some scraps of melody, while the string orchestra provides block-chord punctuation until it alights upon a unison melody to drive the work to its witty climax, with the arpeggio tossed between the soloists, and a nostalgic coda.

In Alexander Vustin's Fantasy for Violin and Orchestra, though, the stylistic collage is more extravagant. There are explicit quotes — an echo of the slow movement of the C major String Quintet and the tune from the Trout Quintet provide the still centre of the frantic finale, and much more passes by fleetingly — while in the first movement the conductor intones one of Schubert's best-known sayings — "Is there such a thing as cheerful music? I don't know any."

The ingredients don't blend convincingly, but Vustin provides plenty of violin writing that Kremer's alchemical powers could turn into something close to a real musical experience.

Hanks for the memory

CINEMA
Derek Malcolm

IT ISN'T difficult to imagine the kind of film Tom Hanks might put together as a director. It would be likeable, fluent but not memorably profound — which are precisely the qualities of **That Thing You Do!** What is surprising, considering this is a debut he wrote as well as directed, is its complete professionalism. There is seldom a moment that has not been carefully calculated. The charm, however, is not fake.

Set in 1964, shortly after the Kennedy assassination and before that defining moment in pop culture when the Beatles stormed America, it tells the tale of a raw rock band, hooked out of nowhere by a sharp manager, who hit the headlines and then drift back to obscurity.

This is neither a warning of the perils of showbiz nor a parodic comment on it. It is more a gentle and observant comedy that tells it like it most probably was. Perhaps the sex, drugs and corruption of a subculture that was later to kill some of its leading lights are played down, but Hanks could argue that this was a more innocent time before the world took note of Jimi Hendrix and the like.

The central character is Guy, excellently played by Tom Everett Scott, who works in his father's store, but gets the chance to break out of the little one-horse town of Eyrie when a local drummer breaks his arm. He joins Johnathon Schaech, Steve Zahn and Ethan Embry as the One-ders, progressing from pizza parlours to baseball stadiums as their fortunes rise.

It's the introduction of Hanks's manager that does it. The band become The Wonders, smarten themselves up, learn how to cope with idiot telly-show spots and manufacture a record that climbs up the hit parade. Suddenly, they're big.

Their ascent to fame may have its farcical elements, but nothing is played solely for laughs. The scene is painted with considerable aplomb by Hanks and his team, some of whom have clearly been near this situation themselves.

The playing is enthusiastic, the timing is well honed and the absurdity of fame and fortune is not lost on Hanks. But he is too clever to mock. These look like real people carried towards success by a combination of chance and skill until they reach that classic point of no return — a beach-party movie that makes the Monkees look like geniuses. The point is that one record isn't enough and tension creeps in when they hit the downward slope.

Hanks doesn't always succeed in developing his characters — Liv Tyler is given little to do as the songwriter's girl. But the pace is brisk enough to forgive him, and the film's fine period design from Victor Kempster and its ebullient camera-work from Tak Fujimoto fit the tone to perfection.

The music, too, is all the better for being more than another secondhand soundtrack: it is an original score, some of it written by the versatile Hanks himself.

It is a film that is hard to dislike, even if it doesn't go deep. It relies not on action, but on the liveliness of character and scene-setting. It is good to know that Hollywood, in the shape of one of its premier stars, can still do simple things well.

The nice thing about **Welcome to the Dollhouse** is that it is not a nice film at all. Todd Solondz's new movie is a black and brackish comedy about growing up gormless that inflicts as much pain as pleasure. Fortunately, it is funny too — sometimes extremely funny.

Heather Matarazzo plays an 11-year-old in glasses and the kind of clothes you don't wear but you hope will come back into fashion one day. She is cursed with a dinkily attractive sister (Daria Kalinina) whom her New Jersey parents adore.

A complete inability to attract even equally plain youths fuels her self-hatred and she sniffs suspiciously at the entire world. But when her sister gets kidnapped, she seizes the chance to become someone with the appetite of an avid but surprisingly subtle cobra.

Solondz's spitefully accurate direction draws an excellent performance from Matarazzo. The rest of the players are well cast too, drawing a portrait of family life that might well put an electioneering politician into a spin, and a view of school life that would have most educational establishments closed down.

With the film hovering just this side of parody, there's no chance of dismissing this comedy too lightly.

Tennis Australian Open

Sampras on song

Stephen Bierley in Melbourne

IT WAS perhaps inevitable, once Pete Sampras had won his second Australian Open with consummate ease against a disappointingly ineffectual Carlos Moya on Sunday, that thoughts should turn to the next Grand Slam event at Roland Garros.

During the presentation ceremony Sampras was referred to as the greatest champion of modern times. It was a brave statement to make in the land of Rod Laver but perhaps the Rocket was excluded on the ground that in his prime he only just squeezed into the open era.

Only six players since 1968, the beginning of open tennis, have reached the singles finals of all four Grand Slam tournaments: Andre Agassi and Jim Courier of the United States, Laver and Ken Rosewall of Australia, Ivan Lendl, formerly of Czechoslovakia, and Sweden's Stefan Edberg. Of these only Laver won the lot.

Sampras's victory against Moya brought his total of Grand Slam titles to nine, leaving Roy Emerson (12), Laver (11), Bjorn Borg (11) and Bill Tilden (10) ahead of him. The one title to escape Sampras is the French, although last year he went very close, losing to the eventual winner, Russia's Yevgeny Kafelnikov, in the semi-final.

The American refused to discuss his aspirations for Roland Garros this year but victory here will surely have encouraged him considerably. The slow balls and the intense heat almost simulated clay, something the red-court king Thomas Muster was quick to exploit by reaching the semi-finals before losing to Sampras.

Sampras usually has at least one poor match during any championship and on this occasion it came in the fourth round against Slovakia's 19-year-old Dominik Hrbaty, of whom more is likely to be heard this year. Otherwise the world No 1 offered further proof that he remains the gauge by which all others must test themselves.

Sunday's final was always likely to be one-sided, given that Moya, *for all his thrilling tennis against* Boris Becker in the first round and Michael Chang in the semi-final, has no experience whatsoever at this Grand Slam peak. Sampras simply bossed him, never allowing him to hit more than a handful of those sumptuous ground strokes that have captivated the Australian audiences.

The centre court crowd desperately wanted the 20-year-old Moya to crackle into life and they cheered like mad when a stinging backhand winner brought him to break point on Sampras's serve.

This he managed, but thereafter Moya's hands were tied as Sampras, sensing that his opponent was tiring and losing heart, played with total authority. There were a great many of those soft, sad groans that are a feature of tennis crowds the world over when they are watching a favourite player at odds with himself or herself and failing to do themselves justice.

A couple of poor line calls in the third set added to Moya's woes and by the end he cut rather a dejected figure, losing his last service game to love to give Sampras the match 6-2, 6-3, 6-3, the most one-sided final here since Lendl defeated Miloslav Mecir in 1989.



Showered with praise . . . Pete Sampras cools off after beating Carlos Moya in the final at Melbourne PHOTOGRAPH: JOE MANN

Hingis shows no respect for elders

Stephen Bierley in Melbourne

WITH a performance of such deceptive effortlessness, so much so that it appeared that not a trace of tension or nerves ever entered her body or mind from start to finish, Switzerland's 16-year-old Martina Hingis on Saturday last week became the youngest player in the modern era to win a Grand Slam singles title.

Her 6-2, 6-2 victory over France's Mary Pierce, herself the champion here in 1995, was one of supreme quality and self-assurance. It had been expected that Pierce's superior weight of shot might trouble Hingis. Not a bit of it.

At one stage in the first set, Hingis won 14 consecutive points, and in all — in this her very first Grand Slam final — she committed only 11 unforced errors. This was sublime tennis, for here was implacable mental toughness combined with fluency and grace.

When Hingis, who is named after Martina Navratilova, hit a forehand passing shot for victory, her 39-year-old mother and coach, Melanie Molitor, leaped from her seat on to the court, fell, and eluded a security guard as Hingis ran towards her. Mother and daughter then embraced in front of the 15,000 crowd.

Hingis's metamorphosis from a highly gifted, slightly vulnerable youngster to a mature Grand Slam champion has been astonishingly quick. Last April, when she defeated Graf in the Italian Open, she was still very much the pony-tailed adolescent competing with the big girls.

But four months later, when she turned up for the US Open with her hair cut short and chic, it was obvious Hingis had cast off her tennis childhood. She duly defeated Arantxa Sanchez Vicario and Jana Novotna on the way to her first Grand Slam semi-final where she lost to Graf 7-5, 6-3.

But before the end of last year Hingis had won her first two ATP titles, at Filderstadt against Anke Huber, and at Oakland, where she dismantled Seles 6-2, 6-0.

On Saturday, the velocity of Pierce's ground shots was immediately apparent, and she had three chances to break in Hingis's opening service game. That Pierce failed was crucial. Immediately Hingis began to play like a dream, and in the space of the next four games Pierce could only manage a mere two points, her own serve collapsing twice.

So captivatingly self-confident was Hingis that this might have been an exhibition match. At 5-0 down, Pierce finally held her serve and, with the help of a Hingis double fault and two meaty forehands, broke the No 4 seed. But such limited success was short-lived.

The second set was tighter. Pierce, shrouded in white towels at the change-overs, fought as hard as she knew, but at 3-2 on the Pierce serve Hingis three times denied her the game.

On one notable point Hingis improbably retrieved a drop shot, and then masterfully volleyed the return. Pierce turned to the umpire in bewilderment, as if she could not believe what Hingis had done. Two games later the match was over. At 16 years three months and 26 days Martina Hingis was the Australian Open champion — the first Grand Slam singles title, no doubt, of many to come.

Cricket

England thwarted

Mark Baldwin in Auckland

NEW ZEALAND No 11 Danny Morrison denied England what had seemed to be certain victory in the first Test at Auckland by batting for nearly three hours in support of century-maker Nathan Astle.

After being down and out at 105 for eight at lunch, still 26 runs short of making England bat again, New Zealand finally ended an astonishing final day on 248 for nine with Astle on 102 and Morrison 14.

England looked shattered. In the Bulawayo Test before Christmas they had failed by just one run to beat Zimbabwe. Now they had been left *frustrated* by their failure to grab one last wicket.

In 69 Test innings Morrison had scored only 359 runs at an average of 7.97. Yet he faced exactly the same number of deliveries as Astle while the pair put together their epic 106-run stand. And he did so without giving a single chance.

Morrison afterwards questioned England's tactics. "If you wanted to be critical then I would say they bowled a bit too short at me. They tried to pepper me, but it was such a slow pitch," he said.

Resuming on 56 for three, New Zealand slumped alarmingly in Tuesday's opening session. Simon Doull hinted at Kiwi resistance as he added 37 with Astle, but when Darren Gough bowled him with a perfect inswinging yorker it looked all over at 142 for nine.

When Astle completed his century, his third in seven Tests, with a cover-driven four off Craig White, Atherton conceded the draw with seven overs still left to be bowled and New Zealand by now 117 runs in front.

New Zealand 390 (Fleming 129) and 248 for 9 (Astle 102); **England** 521 (Stewart 173, Thorpe 119)

● Part-time spinner Michael Bevan led Australia to an easy victory over the West Indies in the fourth Test at Adelaide. Bevan finished with match figures of 10 for 113. He was well supported by Shane Warne, who had a match haul of six for 110. Australia now have a winning 3-1 lead in the five-Test series.

West Indies 130 and 204; **Australia** 517 (Hayden 125); Australia won by an innings and 183 runs

Sports Diary Mike Kiely

Tough fight for Lomu

THE world of rugby was distracted from events on the field when All Black wing Jonah Lomu announced that he was suffering from the serious kidney disorder, nephrotic syndrome. The 23-year-old star, who faces a six-month programme of treatment, was upbeat about his chances of resuming his international career. "I've got the best doctors on the case and I never lie down and let anything trample over me. I'd rather miss out six months than miss out on a whole lifetime of living."

THE Heineken European Cup was won by French club Brive at Cardiff Arms Park with a 28-9 defeat of Leicester.

WORLD football crowned a new king when Ronaldo, the Barcelona and Brazilian international, was crowned Fifa's Player of the Year. The 20-year-old signed by the Catalan club from PSV Eindhoven for £12 million last summer beat off the challenge of Liberian striker George Weah and Newcastle United's Alan Shearer.

PAKISTAN secured the World Series in Melbourne 2-0 after a 62-run victory over West Indies. Having failed in their previous five attempts to lift the one-day trophy, Wasim Akram gave a captain's performance in an opening spell that left his opponents with only 31 runs for the loss of four wickets.

SUPER Bowl XXXI was a triumph for the Green Bay Packers, who saw off the challenge of the New England Patriots 35-21 in New Orleans.

A NEW era in British athletics opened as Linford Christie's eight-year-old record for the 200-metres was broken by Jamie Baulch at the AAA of England Championships in a time of 20.84 secs.

Shiv Sharma is on holiday

Football results

FA CUP Third Round Brentford 0, Manchester City 1; Coventry 1, Woking 1.

FA CUP Third Round Replays Bolton 6, Luton 2; Leeds 1, Crystal Palace 0; West Ham 0, Wrexham 1.

FA CUP Fourth Round Birmingham 3, Stockport 1; Carlisle 0, Sheffield Wednesday 2; Chelsea 4, Liverpool 2; Everton 2, Bradford 3; Hednesford 2, Middlesbrough 3; Leicester 1, Norwich 0; Manchester Utd 1, Wimbledon 1; Newcastle United 1, Nottingham Forest 2; Portsmouth 3, Reading 0; QPR 3, Barnsley 2.

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE First Division Ipswich 5, West Brom 0; Oldham 1, Huddersfield 2; Port Vale 2, Southend 1; Stoke 1, Norwich 2; Sheffield Utd 2, Wolves 3; Swindon 3, Grimsby 3. **Leading positions:** 1, Bolton (played 29-points 58); 2, Sheffield Utd (28-49); 3, Barnsley (27-47).

Second Division Blackpool 3, Millwall 0; Bristol City 0, Bournemouth 1; Burnley 1, Preston 2; Gillingham 4, Plymouth 1; Luton 0, Watford 0; Rotherham 1, Crewe 4; Shrewsbury 2, Peterborough 2; Walsall 3, Notts County 1; Wycombe 3; York 1. **Leading positions:** 1, Brentford (28-52); 2, Luton (26-48); 3, Crewe (27-46).

Third Division Barnet 0, Darlington 0; Brighton 3, Rochdale 0; Cambridge 0, Hereford 1; Cardiff 2, Hull 0; Exeter 0, Colchester 3; Lincoln 3, Doncaster 2; Northampton 3, Hartlepool 0; Scarborough 2, Leyton Orient 1; Scunthorpe 1, Fulham 4; Torquay 0, Mansfield 0; Wigan 3, Swansea 2. **Leading positions:** 1, Fulham (29-59); 2, Wigan (27-53); 3, Carlisle (27-53).

TENNENTS SCOTTISH CUP Third round Airdrie 1, Raith 4; Arbroath 2, Greenock Morton 2; Brechin P, Alloa P; Clyde 3, St Mirren 1; Clydebank 0, Celtic 5; Dundee 3, Queen of the South 1; Dunfermline 4, Ross County 0; Falkirk 1, Berwick 1; Hearts 5, Cowdenbeath 0; Kilmarnock 2, East Stirling 0; Partick 0, Motherwell 2; Queen's Park 1, East Fife 3; Rangers 2, St Johnston 0; Stirling 0, Dundee Utd 2; Inverness Cal 1, Hamilton 3.

SCOTTISH LEAGUE Second Division Stanraer 2, Stenhousemuir 2. **Leading positions:** 1, Livingston (21-45); 2, Ayr (20-42); 3, Hamilton (19-37).

Third Division Albion 1, Forfar 3. **Leading positions:** 1, Inverness Cal (20-41); 2, Forfar (20-35); 3, Ross County (20-33).

Football FA Cup Fourth round Chelsea 4 Liverpool 2

Hughes inspires Chelsea

David Lacey

LIVERPOOL simply could not live with the Chelsea floor show at Stamford Bridge on Sunday. Just when they seemed to have plotted a distinguished course to the last 16 of the FA Cup, the script was torn from their grasp and rewritten by a Welsh hand with Italian endorsements.

After scoring twice in 10 minutes of the first half, last season's Wembley finalists were undone by three Chelsea goals in the space of 12 minutes early in the second, with a fourth to follow. It all made for marvellous theatre and if the competition sees a better match this season one can only hope that it will be the final itself.

The England coach Glenn Hoddle will have watched the proceedings with mixed feelings. Like everyone else he can hardly have failed to enjoy the spectacle, but the part played by Chelsea's *Azzurri* in wresting the tie from Liverpool offered a disturbing augury for England's World Cup qualifier against Italy later this month.

For although three Englishmen, Barnes, McManaman and Redknapp, dominated the match before half-time, three Italians, Di Matteo, Vialli and Zola, became important influences in the second. During the first 45 minutes Barnes had revelled in the room Chelsea were prepared to allowed him, but in the second half he was allowed far less time and space by Di Matteo, and this was where Liverpool lost their impressive earlier rhythm.

Yet the match was surely turned around during the interval when Ruud Gullit decided to replace Minto with Mark Hughes, whose absence at the start had been something of a mystery. Hughes's performance had contributed much to Liverpool's 1-0 defeat on New Year's Day in the Premiership. True, he had since been troubled by an ankle injury but Gullit's thinking was tactical, not medical.

Before Hughes joined the attack Chelsea could not hold the ball up near goal. Vialli and Zola were peripheral figures and Wright, Matteo and Kvarme, Liverpool's new Norwegian centre-back, looked impregnable.

Hughes, with his strength, tenacity and sheer *bloodymindedness*, changed all that. As Liverpool's manager Roy Evans admitted afterwards: "Mark Hughes forced us to go deep. Before he came on we were defending on the halfway line, then we found ourselves defending on the 18-yard line. We dropped off 30 yards and you can't give good players that much space."

Liverpool left Stamford Bridge regretting their first-half leniency on Chelsea, who might well have been four down by the interval. Bereft of Duberry, their defence struggled.

After 10 minutes McManaman reached the byline on the left and Fowler's head just missed his centre. Chelsea failed to intercept a subsequent cross from McAteer, McManaman miscued the ball but still it was not cleared and finally Fowler turned in a low centre from Bjornebye.

Another 10 minutes and Zola, under pressure from Wright, played a careless pass to Newton, who could not prevent Collymore gaining possession and striding through to increase Liverpool's lead.

"We had given two sloppy goals away," said Gullit, "so I had to do something drastic for the second half, and it worked."

That was something of an understatement. The effect of Hughes, now supporting Vialli with Zola playing deeper, was immediate. After 51 minutes he brought down a ball from Clarke and turned under pressure to drive a low shot past James. Two minutes before the hour Hughes's was the crucial touch that set up Zola for a glorious left-foot equaliser.

Then, three minutes past the hour Zola instigated a movement which saw Petrescu's pass catch Liverpool square, Vialli surging through to slide the ball past the advancing James. Then, with 15 minutes remaining, Vialli's shaven head soared above the defence to glance in Chelsea's fourth goal from Zola's precise free-kick.

Thus did Chelsea repeat their 4-2 victory over Liverpool in the third round of the Cup 19 years earlier. For Liverpool the turnabout was equally reminiscent of their 4-3 defeat by Crystal Palace in the 1990 semi-finals. It was also the first time since August 1964, when they were beaten 3-2 at Blackburn, that Liverpool had lost a game after being two goals in front.

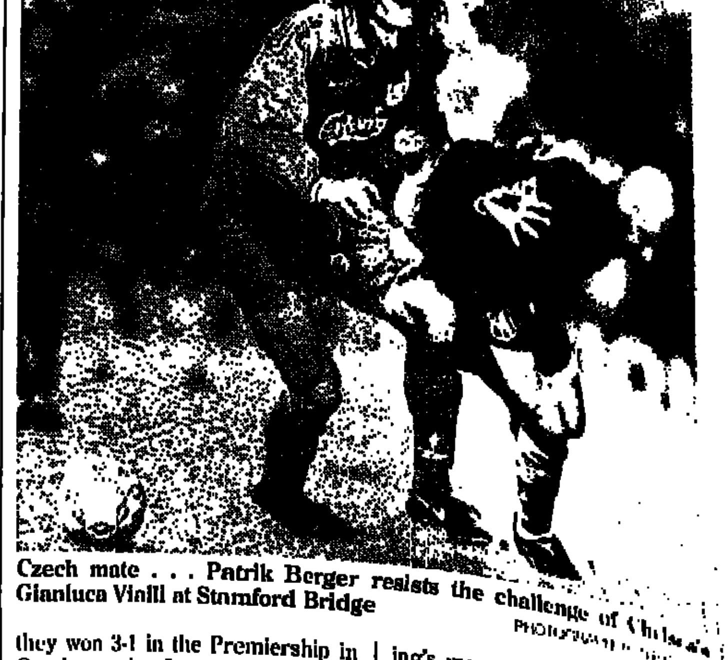
Chelsea now face a trip to Leicester City in the fifth round, where they won 3-1 in the Premiership in October, *writes Don Beet*. Their captain Dennis Wise commented: "Hopefully we can get a result there again."

The holders Manchester United will again face London opposition at home in the fifth round if they survive their FA Cup fourth-round replay at Wimbledon next week. United — who have already knocked out Tottenham — and the Dons were paired in Sunday's draw with QPR.

Arsenal were given another Highbury tie, against Portsmouth, if they beat Leeds in a fourth-round encounter on February 4.

If Woking beat Coventry in their third-round replay and then account for Blackburn at Ewood Park they will go to Jim Smith's Derby. Woking's manager Geoff Chapple said: "It would be marvellous to come up against Jim. We were together years ago at Aldershot."

The big tie in the North, Bradford City v Sheffield Wednesday, brings the former England winger Chris Waddle into confrontation with the Owls manager David Pleat, who allowed him to leave Hillsborough this season.



Czech mate . . . Patrik Berger resists the challenge of Chelsea's Gianluca Vialli at Stamford Bridge

Fifth round draw: Birmingham v Peterborough or Wrexham; Leicester v Chelsea; Man Utd or Wimbledon v QPR; Bolton or Chesterfield v Nottingham Forest; Bradford v Sheff Wed; Man City or Watford v Middlesbrough; Arsenal or Leeds v Portsmouth; Derby v B'burn, Coventry or Woking. Ties to be played February 15/16

Newcastle United 1 Nottingham Forest 2

Woan shoots down Magpies

Michael Walker

EVEN though he has said it only twice since joining Newcastle, Kenny Dalglish is probably already fed up with using the phrase "wonder goal" to describe a decisive shot from a member of the opposition. He said it again on Sunday and once more the goal in question merited the description, Ian Woan's 80th minute volley matching the quality of Matthew Le Tissier's strike at The Dell the previous week.

Newcastle were denied a league win at Southampton when Le Tissier pounced in the last minute, and on Sunday Woan's strike knocked them out of the FA Cup. The trophy cabinet of Newcastle chairman Sir John Hall continues to double as an echo chamber.

When Les Ferdinand leapt to nod Newcastle ahead on the hour Hall must have jingled the coins in his pocket, but when Woan's deflected equaliser was followed by that winner his hand will have turned into a fist.

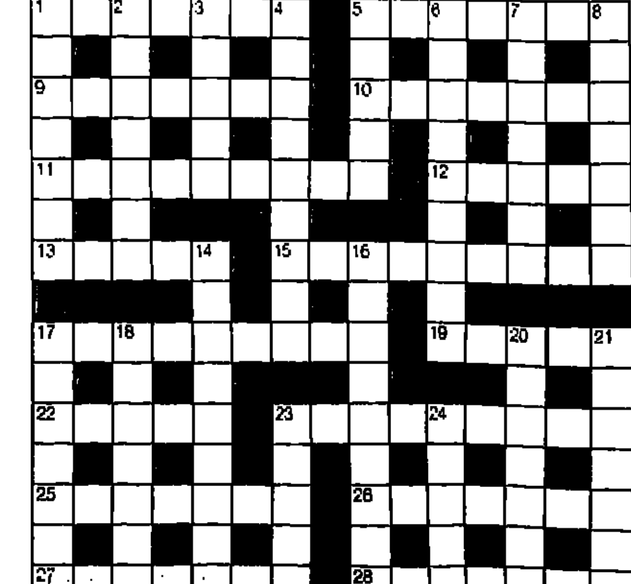
His words with his new manager after this fourth-round exit would have been worth hearing, but if Dalglish is worried he is not showing it. Surprisingly he felt his players lacked good fortune but little else. "Every successful team always needs a slice of luck. That wasn't there for us," he said. "Defensively I thought we looked very sound."

It would be interesting to hear how many of the Toon Army agreed as they grumbled their way out of the ground. With Gillespie on the bench and Ginola wandering infield, Newcastle were a side without wingers and wits. Barton did get forward along the right but usually hit Pearce's back with his crosses. However, with the game meandering along to the hour mark, the slumbering tempo not aided by Crossley's conspicuous time-wasting, Barton tried again and his diagonal centre from deep brought a reward. Ferdinand outjumped everyone and sent a simple header beyond Crossley.

Forest's passing thereafter assumed a previously unseen urgency, and with only 13 minutes they were rewarded when Woan collected the ball 30 yards out and tried a speculative lash.

It worked spectacularly well, hitting first Gillespie, who had replaced Ginola, and then Barton before bobbling its way past Hislop. Three minutes later, after another unfortunate intervention by Barton, Woan did it again, this time driving sumptuously from a narrowing angle. The ball crashed in off the underside of the bar.

Cryptic crossword by Orlando



Across

1 Firm agreement (7)
5 Presumptuous team-member (7)
9 Free — in relative comfort (7)
10 Chian is term for some knocked back wine (7)
11 Innocent allurement for small fry (9)
12 Muse about weed on top of Olympus (5)
13 Return to render (5)
15 Like crown? He didn't (9)
17 Action taken about papers being blue (9)
19 Puccini heroine caught by ape (5)
22 Pick off carbon paper quantity (5)
23 Verse can't upset a prose writer (9)
25 A bit of bream, sole or other seafood (7)
26 Snake brought to continent by Athenian courtesan (7)
27 XI ay 100 (7)
28 After a month grass is laid down (7)

Down

1 Herb found in vehicle and not at home (7)
2 Ordering a meal is causing uneasiness (7)
3 Saw reversible girl, say, reversed (5)
4 So sure a translation appears in reference book (9)
5 Initially trees, trees initially (5)
6 Cad mad about port (9)
7 Inspire a province with teamwork (7)
8 Form of carbon or card (7)
14 An exceptionally attractive person may be met aboard (9)
16 Sneaky subject to worker (9)
17 Red face made manifest (7)
18 Salesman going in to shave and get ready (7)
20 Artist's representation of sea mist or steam is extraordinary (7)
21 One of the leading players died in the Big Apple (7)
23 Guiltless freelance (5)
24 Like constant cold jelly (5)

Last week's solution

P	O	T	I	P	H	A	R		S	T	O	C	K	S
A		R		A		S				U		A		W
P	R	O	G	R	E	S	S		P	L	A	S	M	A
A		U		A		E		L		I		T		S
C	U	P	I	D		V	I	E	W	P	O	I	N	T
Y		E		O		E		X				R		I
			E	X	E	R	C	I	S	E	B	O	O	K
E		C		A		A		C		V		N		A
S	C	A	R	L	E	T	W	O	M	A	N			
O		R				I		G		P		M		C
T	H	R	E	E	F	O	U	R		O	B	E	A	H
E		I		L		N		A		R		D		E
R	E	A	S	O	N		O	P	T	A	T	I	V	E
I		G		P				H		T		N		S
C	L	E	V	E	R		L	Y	K	E	W	A	K	E

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